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BY

AMELIA E. BARR,

Author of "Jan Vedder's Wife."

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FEET OF CLAY.

CHAPTER I.

BELLA CLUCAS.

Where the wide heath in purple pride extends,
And scattered gorse its golden lustre lends,
Closed in a green recess, unenvied lot,
The blue smoke rises from the turf-built cot.

Point me out a place
Wherever man has made himself a home,
And there I find the story of our race ;
What matters the degree ? the kind I trace.

THE most beautiful feature of a Manx landscape is the lovely glens which run inland from the rocky beaches. In all countries one may dream of such valleys—in the Isle of Man it is permitted that mortals shall find in reality the intensely green verdure, the wonderful flowers, the clear air, the charmed stillness of

their visions—a stillness only intensified by the everlasting murmur of the ocean, which vibrates through them like the pulse of life.

Nearly half a-century ago, in one of these lovely, lonely places, stood the cottage of Ruthie Clucas. Like all Manx cottages, it was built of unhewn stones, roughly mortared together, and whitewashed. But the scarlet fuchsia clambered all over the walls and hedged in a pretty garden, where the delicate veronica grew to luxuriant bushes, and the lily-like amaryllis, and the white odorous everlastings, and the fragrant rosemary poured forth lavishly their delightful incense.

The interior of the cottage was that of the Manx fisher-farmer. On the wide hearth there was a fire of peats, and up the chimney a huge chain with hooks, on which to hang the pans above the low fire. The deal tables and chairs and the three-legged stools were scrubbed white as ivory. The equally white dresser was gay with cups and jugs and basins in bewildering quantity, and of the gaudiest colours. Bits of patchwork and pots of geranium, and a clean white curtain at the window, gave freshness to the room. The wide mantelshef was filled with

ocean treasures, marvellous things brought up in the nets from the deep-sea fishing, or from strange countries by adventurous sailors. On the walls were hung some good trout lines, and the wool-carders, and a miniature ship, full-rigged, in a glass case. In one corner there was a small round table, and upon it the Holy Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. In another corner was the spinning wheel ; and above it a little shelf holding Ruthie's almanacs and his rarely-used spectacles.

At the open door Ruthie's only daughter, Bella, stood watching the sun set behind the rugged masses of Spanish Head. Her face had a dreamy and pensive expression ; but then, who with a soul ever watched the daily sun going down over the sea without a feeling of melancholy ? The glory from the horizon enveloped her in its rose and violet haze. It turned her blue flannel skirt into something royal, and her reddish-brown hair into an aureola of gold-red radiance.

Few people thought her face beautiful, but it was neither vulgar nor common-place, for she had a forehead which caught the light and threw it back ; and large blue eyes, glinting and in-

tense. Besides, there was around her the charm of youth and of perfect health, and her tall, supple figure embodied the idea of womanly strength and courage. She looked like a flower which has been hid away in some sweet, secret place which the wind has not blown nor the sun parched.

Yet this was hardly the case. Bella knew the stress of seasons when the "takes" had been small, and her father was gloomy, and her mother irritable or anxious. She had felt keenly the small disappointments flowing from such circumstances. One of her brothers had been "wild," and brought anger and weeping to the hearthstone many a time. She had seen death come twice by the way of the sea. The little domestic frets, the daily inabilities that make so much of household unhappiness, dropped their bitterness and cast their shadows in her lonely home. Its humble, unhewn walls had seen everything that make up life—the striving, the doing, the suffering, the rejoicing of humanity.

But she had the dew of her youth! Trouble has been like the shadow of a bird's wing: it was there, it was gone. When she turned her face from the setting sun it was the face of a girl

who trusted all her own hopes and expected happiness from day to day.

Her mother was sitting by the window knitting a stocking when she re-entered the cottage. She was fifty years of age, but she had ruddy cheeks, and bright, piercing eyes, and black curly hair put back neatly under a white linen cap. Her homespun dress, her little shoulder shawl, her clean checked apron, her fingers busy among the glinting, clicking needles, made her a pleasant picture as she lifted her eyes to meet her daughter's smile.

"Bell, *ma chree* ! * Why aren't you to The House these two days ? "

"I was waitin for Miss Harriet to be comin here. Were you not hearin, mother, that Mr. George is home again ? What for would I be intrudin then, and me not knowin if I would be welcome or not welcome ? "

"I heard the lady axin you."

"Just jokin-like."

"I wouldn' wonder. But before Mr. George went away it was great friends you were, and nobody suitin him like you."

"Mayve ! I was thirteen years old then—a

* My Heart.

girl, and no more. Things are different when one is eighteen, I think."

"Of course, of course! I was forgettin entirely. He'll be changed too. I never thought much of him. A poor heart he had, and the selfish he was! The selfish and obstinate, aw, astonishin."

"Mayve you didn' know him, mother."

"Mayve I don' know my left hand from my right hand. Mayve it's hard to know them that never thinks a straight thought or takes a straight road. Didn' know him, and him comin here day after day, and chittin and chattin, and me that taken with his smooth tongue in spite myself, and of the sense I have!"

"It's five years since, mother."

"Of coorse! He'll be five years better—or five years worse. That the abslit truth. But what for will you be takin him into your count? Put him neither here nor there in your life. He's no more to you than a new chair or table in his mother's house. Miss Harriet is different; a poor girl can take love from a rich woman, when love from a rich man might mean destruction and damnation to her."

"Mother! what are you talkin with the like of them words for?"

"When it's a warnin it's the plainest words a mother can find she's wantin. It is all on *the look* and *the feel* you have been the last two days, Bella. Aw, a mother isn' blind! And it's too much you're makin of the comin back of him that's nothin to you. The still you were, and the sweet, and all your body listening for the steps and the voice that didn' come! And, bless my soul! why should they come?"

"What are you wantin me to do, mother?"

"*Chut!* Do what you would have done if Mr. George was still in Anglan. There are the plover's eggs that the ladies think diamonds of. Three days since, the wet, nor the far, nor this, nor the other, would have stayed you with them. The sun has set, but there is two hours before *the dim*. Take the eggs and go to The House, and be no more mindin the young gentleman than if he wasn' there. And lay high if he speaks to you. I know him. The nice he'll be, and the polite, too, and—'Are you mindin of this, Bella?' and 'Have you forgotten the other?'—and carryin on that pleasin; but all as one, the divil in his heart and his words. I know this kind of the quality—the like is at them."

"You're foolish, mother, though. Do you

think I'll be listenin to what I shouldn' hear? Do you think, then, that Miss Harriet will be lettin me listen?"

"Aw, my lass, you might be took on the sudden. But you'll be safe now, for you're warned afore, and the guard set; that is, if you'll be mindin the words I have said in your ear and the words that you'll hear in your own breast."

Bella had been longing to go to The House for two days, and she was glad when her mother's advice fitted so completely with her own inclination. That it was hampered by her restrictions, and darkened by her evil forebodings, did not trouble her very much. She wished George had not been so much misunderstood; she felt sure that now he had become a man his maturer virtues would bury his youthful follies. She told herself that no one knew him as she did; for girls of thirteen have usually a great opinion of their own wisdom and penetration, and Bella at eighteen clung to her ideal lover of five years ago.

She would have liked to have put on her muslin frock and Sunday bonnet, but her mother's face and her directions to "hurry"

convinced her that any attempt to make herself more attractive than usual would be useless. But there is a wonderful self-satisfaction in youth, and as she walked rapidly forward she soon regained all her ordinary composure. The valley narrowed as she ascended it, and finally, by a mere footpath, emerged upon the hill-top.

The country here was bleak and open. There were no trees, and The House stood about half a mile from the cliff, boldly facing the sea, and in a great measure buffeted by every wind that blew. It was surrounded, however, by a spacious enclosure, and within it the laburnums were dropping flowers of gold, and the fuchsia hedges were a glorious wonder of scarlet and purple bells; the subtle, woody smell of wall-flowers enthralled the senses; white lilies lighted up the pansy beds; and honey-suckle clambered with ivy and clematis over the grey stone walls of the dwelling. It was a large square house, of the Georgian period, with large square rooms and a wide central hall. About it there was nothing dim or romantic or mysterious. It might have been built by a man of the most mathematical mind, whose highest rule of life was that two and two make four.

Bella had been used to go directly through the garden to Miss Harriet's room, and she followed her usual course. In spite of the long, long twilight of the island, it was getting a little dusky among the shrubbery and in the lower rooms of the house, and Miss Harriet's parlour was one of them. But very often at that hour she was with her mother in the more public room, and when so, Bella's approach was always seen, and she was met by one of the ladies. They were both very fond of her, and Bella's visits brought to them a slight change—a sense of human fellowship, which was generally very welcome.

This night the garden was deserted. Neither presence nor sound stirred its solitude. Bella was disappointed. She had felt as if Mr. George would certainly be smoking in its sweet alleys. She had hoped to see him first of all quite alone. If he had forgotten her the shock would be more easily borne ; if he had not forgotten the joy would be sweeter if it were entirely her own.

Her heart fell as she entered the silent hall. The butler—a very aged man—was shuffling through it, and he answered her “ Good evenin ”

with that apathy to youth and beauty which dull old men feel. "My mistress is sick," he said, querulously; "and Miss Harriet is in her own sittin-room. What have you got? Plover's eggs! Aw, dear! they're as unlucky as can be. And the ladies set on eatin them. Women curious folk—yes!"

"I never heard that plover's eggs were unlucky, John Quayle."

"You are young and iggrint; listen to the birds now! There they go, wheelin round the house, and crying, 'Lost! lost!' It's their eggs, I wouldn' wonder! Unlucky! Mortal unlucky, to steal plover's eggs."

"That is a curlew cryin, John Quayle."

"Aw, then, it's deaf I'm gettin; all the same, plover's eggs mortal ill-luck. I wouldn' touch them."

The incident, trifling as it was, affected her unpleasantly. Why hadn't John Quayle told her so before? He had taken plovers' eggs frequently from her. "Why?" Who can tell? How often all of us carry words in our hearts for years, and then in some moment, when we are scarce responsible for the act, fling them like a fate at the consciousness of some one,

whom we have hardly considered, and who seems to have no connection with them !

Bella placed the unlucky gift on a table, and then went empty-handed to Miss Harriet's door. Her light tap did not bring the ready "Come in, Bella," which was its usual result. There was a minute's pause, and the sound of hurried, earnest speaking before the lady uttered her customary permission. Bella, too, made a little pause. That, also, was unusual, and she entered the room suffused with that very consciousness which she had been striving all the way to suppress.

Captain George Pennington stood by the window, absorbed in the abstraction of a cigar from its case of leather and silver. He wore one of the handsomest of cavalry uniforms, and he looked in it—ah ! Bella thought he looked in it the most beautiful and heroic of human beings ! He did not speak a word to her. He did not look at her at all. "I am going to smoke, Harriet," he said ; and with the words he sauntered slowly out of the room.

The two girls stood a moment facing each other. Then Miss Pennington, with a swift movement, clasped Bella's hands in her own,

and said, almost angrily, "Why did you come, Bella? Why did you come? Don't you see that you have taken the first step? It is easy now for him to take the second."

"The why? There was the plover's eggs, that Mrs. Pennington likes——"

"*Chut!* You wanted to see George, you know you did! It was not right or kind of you, Bella. I was coming to see you to-morrow about George. You might have waited—you might have trusted me, Bella."

"My mother was sayin to me, 'Take the eggs,' and I said what for would I take them?"

"The eggs! the eggs! a poor excuse, Bella! You came because you wanted to come."

"What for would I go to tell you lies? My mother was sayin, 'Take the eggs, and never be mindin if Mr. George is at home or in Anglan What is Mr. George to the like of you?'"

"Oh! she thought you should face temptation, and make believe it was not there. Women can't do that, Bella; it is better for them to keep out of sight and hearing of danger."

"The cross you are to-night, and the proud, Miss Harriet; but I'll go home, of coorse; and

it's no more I'll be comin here—till you send for me."

"Don't think I am cross and proud, Bella. There are troubles and reasons in all families that are not to be told out of them. My mother is sick with sorrow, and my own heart is aching. If I should see wrong coming to you through George Pennington, how could I bear it? We have been like sisters, have we not, Bella?"

"Middlin like, Miss Harriet; but ther's a deal of difference between me and you. Of coorse you've been gracious to me, very gracious, and what you tell me to do, the same I'll do—if I can."

"It isn't *can*, it is *must*, Bella. You *must* do it, or sin may come of it, and sorrow may come of it, and God only knows what following. Hear what I say! My brother George will tread upon the heart of any woman who loves him—whether she be mother, sister, or wife. Do you think I would say this to you if I did not feel a true affection for you? Oh, Bella, we have played together when we were children!—such long, happy days—remember them, dear! We have been firm friends ever since we could say each other's name. Does it matter much if

I am rich and you are poor? No, indeed! But because I am rich and you are poor I will not see you injured. I will not see you in danger and not try to save you."

"Be content for all, Miss Harriet. If there be danger near me, there is the love to shield me, and the good home for shelter, and the father and brothers that would fight for me, and the mother that would lay down her life for mine, and I'm not fearin *with all them and God above me!*"

"And I love you also, Bella. Don't put me out of your counting."

"No, surely, of coorse; but you are not trustin me much, I think."

"Because I would not trust myself under the same circumstances—because, Bella, I am in love, and I know what the heart of a woman in love is."

The girls were about the same height. Their hands were clasped. Their eyes met tenderly and questioningly; then they kissed each other. Harriet felt as if the kiss promised her all that she could ask. Bella had been a little offended, and she meant it as the sign of reconciliation and renewed affection.

"Come this way, Bella. George is waiting for you in the garden—I know he is. You will be forced to see him, but not to-night, dear—not to-night. I want you first to tell your mother what I have said, and I want also to talk to him. One should always do everything possible to prevent evil. That is our part. Only God can cure evil that has really happened."

Holding Bella's hand, she was talking thus to her, as they went through a long passage and a flagged courtyard to a rear door, which led directly on to the *gaery*, or uncultivated land, beyond.

There was a sense of hurry in all Miss Pennington's words and ways, and Bella felt completely overruled by it; but as she went rapidly across the dusky *gaery* her eyes were dim with tears and her heart heavy with its new experience.

"She was cross to me and unjust—desperat unjust—thinkin wrong, too, and me givin her no reason! Aw, scandalous! I'll go yandhar no more; I'm intarmined on that!"

The sense of injustice filled her warm heart. She walked rapidly, almost unconscious of her footsteps. As she got further and further away

she began to talk aloud, with little sobs and short pauses between her words.

"She might have waited—till the warnin was needed—I'm a poor girl—iggrint and poor—and of coorse, of coorse! the worst is to be put to me."

When she got to the edge of the cliff she turned and looked back at The House. In *the dim* it had almost a spectral aspect, standing up so white amid the dark foliage surrounding it. Houses have their atmosphere as well as individuals. In the stillness and solemnity of the night they reveal something of their interiors. Bella had turned and looked at it hundreds of times before, and then dropped into the little valley, with the feeling of that look in her heart. Hitherto it had been one of lonely peace. This night it gave her a thrill of restlessness and anxiety. She felt that sorrowful women were walking about its rooms and gazing from its windows.

The first descent into the valley was steep, and there were great boulders on either hand, lichen-covered, and half hid in brackens. Captain Pennington was leaning against one of them, smoking a cigar. She could not avoid

him without turning back. Should she do so? She asked herself the question, and resolutely answered, "It's straight on I'll go. It's my way, and the right way, and I'll be turnin out of it for nobody."

"*Bella! Bella!*" He flung his cigar away, and came towards her with outstretched hands.

She trembled, she stood still, she was speechless in her joy and fear and great surprise. For though she had been sobbing to her complaints of Harriet's injustice, it had not been Harriet's injustice which had wounded her most. Deeper than any sense of her friend's suspicions was the pain of George's silence and apparent neglect. It was well that she had made no positive promises, for at that moment she would have broken them all.

"*Bella! Bella!* Have you forgotten me?" He took her hand, and did precisely as Bella's mother had foretold. And in a few minutes Bella was quite at ease with the handsome soldier, who kept reminding her of the days they had gone trout fishing together, and the mornings on Scarlett rocks, and the evenings out on the moonlit sea. "Do you remember,

Bella, the little cove at Scarlett where we let the boat drift, and bid each other good-bye for five long years? What a pretty girl you were! And though I suppose you have forgotten it, do you know that you really kissed me and promised to be my wife when I grew up to be a man?"

Bella lifted a face all alight with joy and love to the dark, handsome one at her side. It drew her like a magnet; the kiss almost asked for trembled into the space between them and made it sweetly sensitive. All warnings were forgotten; the valley was an enchanted valley; right or wrong, she was happy beyond her hope or dreaming.

To be young and beautiful, and to find herself in the sweet, hazy twilight of a summer night, beloved by a being fascinating by nature, and endowed by her own imagination with every heroic and lovable quality, what hope was there that Bella would or could listen to warnings or advices?

Nay, the warnings and advices had even in some measure prepared her to resist them. She had a nature self-contained and self-reliant. She was conscious of her own physical strength

and courage, and in her untrained mind physical capability stood for mental strength and temper. Harriet Pennington's words had not only wounded her pride, they had roused in her an active antagonism—a desire to do the very thing she had been forbidden to do, and in the doing declare her ability to guide with wisdom her own destiny.

A strange tumult was in her heart, but it was a happy tumult ; and Captain Pennington was satisfied with the result of his interview. He strolled home in a mood of sweet anticipation, and the thought of Harriet's opposition was an element piquant and provocative.

And at this stage Bella was too excited to affect indifference or to contemplate deception. Her mother was sitting on the step of the cottage. The day had nothing more to demand of her ; she had put away even her knitting, and was idly gazing at the herring-boats lying at rest on the horizon. Her husband and sons were with the fleet, but she was not anxious about them ; nor, at the moment, was she troubling herself even about Bella.

But the girl's face startled her. " Sit down, Bell, *ma chree* !" she said. " I wouldn' trust

but you've been worried a bit by the way you look."

"Miss Harriet was cross—uncommon cross—you'd hardly credit the unjust she was—and the suspicious! aw, scandalous!"

"Is it true you're tellin'?"

"And warnin me about the Captain and the like—and runnin him into the garden, and me out by the back door, on to the *gaery*, for fear I'd be speakin with him at all."

"Ladies' airs and faddin! Have no regardin for such! Captain Pennington isn' gold and diamonds, if all words are true words that are spoke of him. There's odds of gentlemen, and the best kind goin will do for you to leave alone. Aw, yes; middlin bad, the most of them."

"Mother, I'll tell you all the truth. At the top of the glen Captain Pennington was waitin for me; and that pleased and friendly!—and out with both hands!—and was I forgettin him and the good days behind us?—and carryin on like that."

"Of coorse, of coorse! Sweet as honey he'd be—desperat sweet!—and it's as much as you'll do to keep clear of him; but aw, *ma chree*! shut your eyes to the like of him, and

don' mind what he says ; the soul of a foolish girl dwells in her ear, aw, yes ! and she may be led away by a whisper."

"Let us go to bed, mother. You was allis hard on Captain George."

"Aw, my dear, you was allis far too soft. But bed is the best, and sleep, and mayve good dreams to make the simple wise ! Good night, *ma chree* ! Sleep and I'll wake for you. It's a mother's prayer that brings the angels round, and the holy thoughts, and the paysible ;—she's gone ;—God bless the girl !"

CHAPTER II.

WANTED, A THOUSAND POUNDS.

Those who kindle a fire must put up with the smoke.

There are no windows in a man's breast to publish what he does within doors, unless his own rash folly blab it.

“**A**ND he really wants mother to give him a thousand pounds—to pay his debts.” Harriet Pennington felt obliged to utter the words aloud ; she could not believe her own thought unless she made it audible. A thousand pounds seemed a great deal of money to her. How it appeared to her mother, how it would affect their own daily life, she could not tell. Mrs. Pennington had always been reserved as to her resources. They had lived in good style, and the cash for their domestic wants had come without care and without petty restrictions and delays. But yet Harriet understood that her brother's demand had brought sorrow and anxiety. The private interview between mother

and son had been a prolonged and painful one, and the mother had certainly been made ill by its revelations,

She loved her brother, but she was not blind to his faults. During her childhood she had often suffered for them. Whatever others thought of George Pennington, she knew him to be selfish and overbearing. "His fine appearance! His fine manners!" she said, scornfully, "what are they worth? He never does a really noble, or a really kind action. His love has never conferred happiness on any living creature, because he has never sacrificed his smallest personal desire to those whom he professed to love—and I saw his face last night, as he watched Bella coming through the garden. Will he respect her because she has been the playmate and companion of my childhood?—because I still love her and care for her future? I would not believe him if he swore to it—I saw his face last night."

It is not usual in these days for young girls to soliloquise, because now the majority live in crowds, they travel, they have continual society. But children and girls reared in seclusion, with few companions and no confidants, are almost

certain to talk to their own hearts. But for this resource Harriet would often have felt very lonely. She had grown familiar with it. If she was happy she told herself so ; if any annoyance came into her life she was certain to discuss it *sotto voce* in her solitude.

She stood at the open window as she spoke her thoughts, letting the breeze from the sea blow upon her and stir into exquisite motion the tendrils of her dark hair and the white muslin of her gown. Her face was beautiful, and her blue-grey eyes clear as truth itself. She had a tall figure, moulded to perfection, and the finest complexion imaginable—white as the petal of a white rose, but reddening, like the morning, to a noble feeling or a pleasant thought. There was a great bowl of Derby china on a little stand before her ; it was full of freshly-gathered red roses ; and when she had finished her soliloquy she stooped and laid her face against their fragrant, dewy leaves.

“ I wonder if *you, too*, know what sorrow is ! ” she whispered to them. “ Are your hearts aching because you have been taken from your companions ? Perhaps the little roses and the half-opened buds were your children ! Do you

miss them ? And the butterflies, and the warm sun ? Did the other flowers send you perfumed messages when you were on your tree, and will they forget you now ? You are only roses, but you are far more beautiful than I am. Oh ! if you should have a sensitive life of your own, and be breathing away your sweet souls in mournful memories and unavailing regrets ! ” She kissed them ; one, and then the other, and thought with a kind of anger of the gardener’s sharp shears. “ I will tell Kerwin to let them live out their few days where God set them. I wonder I never saw before the reproachful sadness of flowers cut off from all they love and then bound together in a bowl or a vase ! ”

“ Harriet, I want you.”

“ I am here, George.”

“ But I want you to walk to Castleton with me.”

“ Not this morning—I am expecting a friend.”

“ A friend ! I am your brother, and my claim is first. I think all friends ought to step aside for me, especially when I see you so seldom. Come, Harry, I have important things to talk of.”

"Then let us go to the beach."

"I want to go to Castleton."

"George, dear, I would rather not go there this morning."

"Then take your own way. To please themselves!—*that* is all women think of. 'Selfish, aw scandalous selfish,' as Quayle would say."

"George, I do not want to go out at all ; and if I go to the beach it will be to please you, and not myself."

"Very well, Harry ; anyway you like to put it. Only do not waste my time. I will give you ten minutes to put your bonnet on."

But Harriet was a girl of deliberate and exquisitely neat methods ; and the Captain's ten minutes was much lengthened. He made no special complaint ; it was his interest at this hour to please his sister ; and he began the process as soon as Quayle had closed the door behind them.

"What a pretty garden you have made, Harry ! Such noble trees ! Such lovely flowers !"

"Yes," she said, "they really look as if they enjoyed themselves here ; I hope they do."

The remark was the only one George thought

it necessary to make. Having sacrificed so much to his sister's prejudices, his own desires became paramount. He was never inclined to approach them in pleasant or unobtrusive ways; and a kindly diplomacy, when it was "only his sister," seemed to him a ridiculous piece of politeness.

"Harry, has mother told you about the thousand pounds I need?"

"Yes."

"Then say something about it."

"You might not like to hear what I have to say. A thousand pounds seems to me a large sum of money."

"Women are always unreasonable about money. They simply have no just ideas on the subject. Mother and you are living in extravagance—yes, in dreadful extravagance; three men servants and three women servants to wait upon two single women; a pair of ponies for mother's phaeton; a saddle horse for yourself—everything your hearts can desire; and I am driven out of my wits nearly to make buckle and tongue meet."

"'Everything our hearts desire' does not include gambling, racing, and other sinful and wasteful methods of throwing money away. And

you must be a heartless son to count up against mother a thing so necessary to her comfort as her ponies. Besides, what right have you to make any remarks about mother's expenditure? Her money is not yours."

"Harriet, keep your temper, and hear me out. How do you know that it is not mine? I suppose our father is dead. I suppose, from all appearances, that he left money. Being the only son, I suppose my interest in it would begin when I was of age. Mother has never explained my position to me, and I must say she has acted in a very singular manner, and I have been uncommonly patient—yes, by Jove, uncommonly patient!"

"Why are you complaining to me now? If you think so shamefully of mother, go to her with your supposed wrongs. I have thought hardly of you many times, George, but never so badly as at this moment. Your ingratitude is something shocking."

"Come now, Harriet, you have no right to prejudge me. You accept things just as they are, because things are exceedingly comfortable for you; and, as the lawyers say, 'you have no interest to move the question.' But put your-

self in my place, and the case is different. Only the day before I left my company I was introduced to a fellow, who, on hearing my name, said at once, 'Pennington! The Cumberland Penningtons, I suppose?' The question put me all out. I don't even know my own family name; and in a crack regiment that is not a subject where ignorance is desirable. You and mother sit days and months and years together; has she never told you anything?"

"If you mean has she never told me anything about our family, I answer no! I never asked her. If you want me to ask her, I must say in advance that I will not do it. If there is any mystery about us, be sure that her reticence is the greatest kindness. There is always sorrow in any mystery, perhaps even sin. We ought to be thankful to have no knowledge of that kind. And I do not believe that there is any mystery. Mother does not look like a woman with a secret. She is cheerful, energetic, full of every-day business, and not at all given to brooding or looking behind her. I never saw her frightened in my life; she never watches for letters, and she very seldom writes them. It is all nonsense! You want money from mother, and as you have no

shadow of proof that she has done wrong to you, you would like to excuse yourself upon the *likelihood* of her having done you a wrong. Such a suspicion is in itself an act of wickedness !”

As they spoke they had reached the top of the cliff. There was a large flat boulder near by, and they sat down upon it. Harriet was trembling with indignation, but for all that she was under the influence of her brother. His commanding figure, his striking face, his graceful undress uniform, his authoritative manner, affected her as such things naturally affect women, though if she had been able to analyse her submission to his will she would both have resisted and resented the power that controlled her.

“I do not want to sit down, George,” she said, “and there is no use in us prolonging this discussion,” but yet she obeyed the magnetism of his eyes and the touch of his hand. It struck her, as she did so, how irresistible he must be to a woman in love with him ; and her thoughts went laden with pity and fear to the little cottage where Bella Clucas was at that moment dreaming the sweetest and the most unlikely of romances.

But though Harriet sat down in obedience to her brother's glance and touch, she endeavoured to change the subject of conversation. She pointed out the tremulous, volitant motion of the breeze upon the waves, and the two or three solitary crafts skimming them. "The herring fleet is in harbour," she said. "Those are private boats. The one to the eastward is Colonel Porter's pleasure skiff. That one lying on the horizon belongs to the Kellys."

"Harriet, never mind the boats! I care nothing about them. They may go the bottom, if the winds and the waves are agreeable. You say that mother at no time told you anything about our family?"

"Not one word at any time."

"You suppose yourself to have been born here?"

"I remember no other home."

"But I do! I was five years old when I came here. I remember a house that in my memory was ten times as large as the one we are living in now. It had staircases as wide as our dining-room; silent, dark staircases, with soft-footed men in a yellowish livery going up and down them. I remember peeping through

the balusters once, and seeing an endless room all alight, and filled with ladies and gentlemen, and hearing wonderful music. The house was in a wood or park. I used to ride about it, and think it was all the world, and a very big world too."

"You dreamt the whole story, George. Bella and the peasants, and the fisher men and women, every one of them, tell me something similar. They say they have been with the fairies."

"You need not try to insult my intelligence, Harriet. I dreamt nothing that I have told you. I remember it. As for the fairies——"

"Do not abuse the fairies, George. Every one has seen them on this island. Hal Corkhill told me last Tuesday that they kept him in Ballasalla Glen all Monday night."

"The man was drunk, of course. But it is singular that both you and mother have taken up the same cry."

"Have you spoken to mother about these remembrances, as you call them?"

"When I was a boy, about nine years old, I told her one night, as we were walking in the garden, about that other garden. I described both it and the conservatory, and the long glass-

house full of great clusters of white and purple grapes."

"Well?"

"She said, as you have just said: 'George, you have been dreaming.' Her voice was so cold and stern, I durst say no more; and, indeed, she took me into the house and called Curran—you remember Curran—and said, 'Curran, I particularly request you to tell Master George no more about the fairies. He is beginning to forget where real life ends and fairy-land begins.'"

"Have you never spoken since?"

"When I went to Rugby I spoke again. She listened then more patiently. I reminded her of one dark, windy night, when I went to bed in my clothes, and woke up in a carriage. There was no light but the gleaming of the carriage lamps, and I was in the arms of a gentleman who spoke kindly to me, and told me 'to go to sleep again.' Mother also spoke to me, and I saw you upon her knee. You were a little babe, and you cried a great deal. This is my first remembrance of you, Harriet."

"Well, then?"

"Only that when I woke next I was in a ship.

There a man with a long beard, who carried me about a great deal. I am sure he was a sailor ; but the man who held me in the carriage was a gentleman. I cannot say how, being such a little fellow, I could make this distinction, but I know that I am correct."

"And you told mother all this?"

"I did. I was fourteen years old then, and not to be chid and snubbed and put to bed ; but the result came to be about the same thing. She smiled incredulously, and said, 'You must have had a singular and forcible dream when you were very young. Perhaps it is a prophetic one.' She added, 'You may have seen the home of your manhood ; indeed, I hope great things from you, George,' and so on, and so on, anything to turn the subject and give it an air of fancy and unsubstantiality."

"Suppose all this is true, George, what does it amount to? That the probability is we were born in an affluence which has been lost. That loss implies, as I have said, either sorrow or something worse than sorrow. Perhaps the death of our father made us poor. But what would have been poverty in England is wealth on the island. I think it is very likely mother

retired here in order to save enough to give you your education and commission. She is precisely the woman to make a grand sacrifice and say nothing about it."

"I wonder where the 'sacrifice' comes in. She has always had a beautiful house, and plenty of servants, and all that a woman could desire."

"Mother is still handsome. When she came here she must have been younger than you are to-day. If there is any truth in your dream she had likely been born to a high social position. Is it no sacrifice for a woman of twenty-three to live in absolute seclusion and give up her whole life to her children?"

"Mother always seemed to enjoy herself. Of course women like lovers, and admiration, and I daresay she could have plenty of both—the officers from the garrison would have liked to come to our house; but I never heard of mother giving any of them encouragement, did you?"

"I will not sit here and discuss so scandalous an insinuation."

"Then we will return home. I meant no harm, not the slightest disrespect, I assure you ;

but, Harriet, you have a bad habit of looking for unpleasant motives."

She rose as he spoke, and for some moments they walked on silently. The salt savour of the sea wind was crossed by a waft of hay-fields and meadow-sweet; and Harriet could not resist the influence. "How delightful it is!" she said.

"What is delightful?"

"The air, the sea, the land, the azure above us?"

"Oh! I was thinking of that thousand pounds. Harriet, I *must* have it. I cannot go back to my regiment without it. If there is no other way then I will sell out. Anyhow, a beggar like me has no business among gentlemen."

"You are not a beggar, George. Major de Luny lives in good style upon half your income—and he has a large family."

"Pshaw! There is no reasoning with women. A statement is all that they comprehend. I must have a thousand pounds. Will you help me to get it? I am your only brother, and you act as if you disliked to put a finger out to aid me in my trouble."

"If you are in real trouble I will do all that I possibly can to help you, George."

"I am in real trouble. If I do not get the money I shall be ruined and disgraced."

"Have you told mother this?"

"Well, yes—in a measure."

"Tell her as plainly as you tell me."

"You might say the words for me. When I spoke about a thousand pounds she stood up and looked at me so steadily that I did not know what I was saying or doing, and I blundered into an excuse which just made everything worse."

"What was that? Surely you did not dare to question mother about money, or what you call 'your rights'?"

"No. I told her about a bit of paper between young Penrith and me, and the moment I mentioned his name she turned as white as a ghost, and then fell down in a faint. I thought she was dead for a few minutes, and suffered more than she did, I am sure. It knocked me all up, I was ill for hours, and I could not bear to go through a scene like it again."

"I should think you would not like mother to go through another scene like it."

"You know how to manage mother, Harriet. Speak to her ; tell her I must have the money. Say you think I ought to have it. Show her how you might economise a little—you know what to say—anything likely to bring the guineas."

"George, if I do this for you, will you promise me not to trouble Bella Clucas? I love Bella. I do not want her to suffer for your pleasure. Promise me not to make love to her ; you cannot do so without deeply wronging her."

"Did I not obey you last night? What you told me to do I did."

"I spoke in the hurry of the moment, and not very wisely, I fear, George ; for, considering your former intimacy with Bella, it was only natural that you should have recognised her. And Mrs. Clucas and Ruthie will expect a call ; and I was foolish to put you in a false position. I ought to have allowed you to speak kindly and naturally to Bella last night, and then no importance would have been given to a few words, either here or there. George, promise me not to use your power over Bella."

"Get me a thousand pounds, and you may dictate to me every word that I am to say in

that quarter. Bella is a dear girl, and a handsome girl, and I should enjoy making her desperately in love with me; but I am not above being bought out, if you want a monopoly of Bella's affection."

This declaration closed the conversation. Harriet did not reply to it. She was dazed and pained with the revelations made to her. Once she glanced into her brother's face. She wondered if there might not be on it some smile or glance which would undo the totally selfish impression of his words. No! It was handsome, cool, and intelligent; but it was a face without a heart.

CHAPTER III.

THE COTTAGE IN GLEN-MELLISH.

Passions, like seas, will have their ebbs and flows.

"To-morrow I will live," the fool does say ;
To-day itself's too late :—the wise lived yesterday.

Fate ne'er strikes deep but when unkindness joins ;
But there's a fate in kindness,
Still to be least returned where most 'tis given.

THE cottage of Ruthie Clucas stood in the little valley called Glen-Mellish : " Mellish " —*honey*—probably because its sides were covered with wild thyme, and the bees, busy and pleased, were, in the season, always making honey there. As George and Harriet Pennington walked through it the following morning their ancient murmur was all round ; and as they approached the cottage they saw some rude shelves upon the hill-side, filled with the same straw skeps whose shape was familiar two thousand years ago to " sweet Hymettus hill."

"Behold," said George, "the citizens of every community. I never was anywhere, Harriet, where the peasants were too poor to own this winged stock. In the languid lotus lands of Africa I saw the bees busy all day. In Egypt they robbed the orange flowers of the Said, and the roses of Facium, and the treasures of the Arabian jasmine, from dawn till dark. In Persia and India they worked among gardens of spice. In Syria and Palestine the very rocks brought forth honey."

Harriet looked at him with admiration. "How much you know, George! How far you have travelled! You love learning! You are no empty-headed fop. How, then, can you bear to throw away your time among horse jockeys and your money among gamblers?—men without ideas and without feelings."

"How? How can any one do what is foolish and unworthy of them? I lean to jockeys and gamblers; Fairfax to wine and women. Derby is ruining himself with dabbling in bricks and mortar; and another fellow I know by yachting. I am sure I wish ten ounces of wisdom came with every ounce of gold. I can tell you that I never had one hour's real pleasure out of that

thousand pounds. However it went, it went with annoyance, and was followed by anxiety. I did not even have the sense of spending royally. Some one else at my side spent thousands where I spent hundreds ; and I felt just as mean as if I had kept my guineas in my pocket."

"A great deal meaner, I should say. George, I had a long talk with mother last night, and she is quite inclined to let you sell out. Indeed, she thinks you ought to."

"You mean that she will not let me have the money?"

"I think she cannot. She told me that she had not been responsible for your education, nor for your commission, nor for the income given you to support it. She said she had disapproved of the way in which you had been educated ; and regretted, in stronger words than I ever heard mother use before, that you had not been sent to school in the island, and articled to Daniel Teare afterwards, for a lawyer. She thinks it is not too late for you yet to begin the study of the law ; and I can see that she intends you to pay the debts you have contracted out of such resources as you possess."

He took the information with an indifference which amazed his sister. "If it comes to that, Harriet, all right! I know the worst, and it isn't bad. I do not believe I like the army. If I had ten thousand a year, the uniform is becoming, and it might be worth a trifle of a duty to have the right to wear it. But a cavalry officer on five hundred pounds a year is in a mess all the time. I will not trouble mother any more. Jacques can arrange everything, and I will run down to London and bring away my books and the valuable things I gathered when I was travelling. They will make a kind of museum for you, and are better here than anywhere else."

"George, do not take such an important change so recklessly."

"How do you want me to take it? Am I to stamp, and rave, and tear my hair out? I have my own philosophy, Harriet; and it never permits me to regret the inevitable."

"Yesterday you were very anxious. I do not understand you."

"As long as it seemed to be my duty to worry about that thousand pounds I think I worried very conscientiously. Mother has now

decided the question of my future ; I accept her decision as the voice of Destiny. I have nothing now to do but acquiesce ; the result will come to me ; and in the meantime I shall improve my acquaintance with natural history—and pretty Bella Clucas.”

“George, if you——”

“Harry, you have run yourself out of threats, you have not one left that I fear ; that thousand pounds failure sets me free ; I think I am glad I have lost it.” Then his face darkened, and he said through tightly-shut teeth, “I wish I knew who paid for my education and commission ; I do not thank mother for making me take any one’s charity. Why didn’t the fellow give me his name with his gold ? I hate anonymous gifts.”

They were at the cottage door as he spoke, and as soon as he noticed the fact his face cleared instantaneously. It seemed to cost him no effort to put disagreeable thoughts out of his consciousness, to clothe his countenance in careless good humour, and to enter the humble door with an irresistibly delightful manner.

Bella stood at the long table kneading barley cakes. Her arms were bare and her hands

covered with dough. She held them up with a pretty, deprecating smile, and dropped a courtesy to her visitors. In the bright sunshine she looked incredibly lovely. George gazed at her beaming face, set in its frame of radiant hair, and told Bella his admiration in one swift glance that said more than could have been said in an hour's flattering words.

Harriet seated herself upon one of the white three-legged stools ; but George leaned against the lintel of the door. He knew in what positions he looked the handsomest ; and he was not disposed to place his fine figure in any posture where it did not show to the best advantage.

Mary Clucas heard the little stir of their arrival, and came hastily in from the fish-shed behind the house. The young soldier doffed his cap, and began at once "the chittin, and chattin, and ways that are pleasin," which Mary had admitted to her daughter were irresistible. She was "throwin the joke back at him" before she thought of the dangerous license this joking permitted. Ruthie simply had no thought of danger. He would as soon have expected that his handsome son, Gale Clucas, would go

courting the Deemster's pretty daughter as that Captain Pennington would be casting love glances at his own Bella. For he had known the Captain many a year, and had taken him with him in his fishing-boat in all kinds of weather. Also, he had seen him about the cottage constantly ; and thought it nothing wrong for Bella, a barefooted lassie, to carry his creel and bait, and go with him to the hills, just to "break the lonesomeness."

He followed his wife with that slowness of step which became the dignity of a Manx husband ; a personage who always considers himself a great man in his own household, and who assumes a very lordly tone with his "woman" and the children. Ruthie was large and fresh-looking, with eyes that reminded one of the sea ; white, even teeth ; and a full black beard, streaked with grey.

He took the Captain's gloved hand in his huge clasp, and welcomed him with a cordiality none the less sincere for its touch of shyness. Then, stroking his hair, and coughing a little nervously, he sat down in the chair which was his of right, and began to talk of the night's fishing.

"A grand night it was," he said; "aw, yes, and a grand take, and God blessin the nets. Fish *thallure**! and fine ones; aw, wonderful fine. And I'll be sendin Gale with a basketful to The House, though maybe the like is at them."

"Thank you, Mr. Clucas; but why take the trouble? I think Jemmy Cleator is bringing them every morning now."

"I wouldn' wonder; he's a pushin fellow—uncommon pushin. I'm knowin directly the like of him."

"And he might feel hurt if we did not buy them."

"Bless my heart! Let him cure himself then. Aw, yes, a pushin fellow—but no matter—no matter. Captain, here is a soldier for you"; and he set forward a basket, containing a tremendous lobster:—"brought him up this mornin. Look at him! the big he is, and the strong, and the wise! No drill needed for him, Captain. He was born terrible; aw, and wicked enough, whatever else; and ready armed."

Captain Pennington stooped and examined the creature with interest. "You are right,

* In abundance.

Ruthie," he said. "If Her Majesty could only arm her soldiers as Nature has armed this fellow what fighters she would have! What terrible claws! And his eyes see before and behind; and his antennæ have the organ of touch at their extremities, and of smelling and hearing at their base!"

"Is it thrue you're tellin, Captain?"

"He is parading his learning, Mr. Clucas. Do not believe him."

"It is true, nevertheless, Harriet."

"Perhaps so; but mortals would rather not smell with all their fingers, George. Lobsters are not to be envied, are they, Mary?"

"Fish here, and fish there, smokin and dryin—what would I do with more noses than one, Miss Harriet? *The bad! the bad!* it would be for fisher folk."

"I wonder you've got the face, Mollie! If I didn' know nothin, I'd take aise":—then going to the door open towards the back of the house, Ruthie vociferated Manx at Gale, until the young fisher came with a string of herring, so fresh and firm and brilliant that the daintiest lady need not have hesitated to touch them.

Gale blushed when he saw the company, but

he touched his forehead with his vacant hand and sharply told Bella "to put the fish in a clean towel and carry them to The House." To command his sister was one of Gale's natural privileges, and he did not dream that he was making Captain Pennington's blood tingle with his authoritative tone.

But perhaps Harriet noticed the unspoken championship, for she said, "I will take them, Bella. Put them in a basket, *ma chree* ! Come, there is no more to be said. I have made up my mind."

"Of coorse, of coorse ! The quality has their own way, Gale. Don' be lookin black, lad—and are you seein the Captain ? Bless you ! A puffic gentleman grown ! What capers you two were at, colloquin like, years ago ; hard to forget is them !"

Gale touched his forehead again, but he made no further advances upon the capers of past years. And Captain Pennington's polite questions did not seem to encourage a renewal of them. Gale felt this, and the hot flush mounted to his face, as he stood embarrassed at the open door. The soldier and the fisher, scanning each other with a vague admiration and hostility,

made a remarkable contrast. For Gale Clucas was, after his own fashion, quite as handsome a man as George Pennington; though Gale's fashion was of a more primitive kind. For he was simply a young blonde giant, dressed in blue flannel, and spangled to the waist with the moonlight glimmer of the herring scales.

He was glad enough to excuse himself from any further compliments and questions; and indeed every one was sensible of the strained and restless feeling peculiar to first visits, when long-broken threads are to be lifted, and a past association examined in the light of new circumstances and changed feelings and ideals.

During the visit Bella had scarcely lifted her eyes from the cakes she was patting and rolling, and George had not appeared to pay much attention to her, yet no movement of her graceful head or body had escaped him. The thousand pounds, and all of life it represented—duties, discipline, and social claims and advantages, he cast them behind him. It was the new, the present moment, the tangible gratification, that had value to George Pennington. Besides, other and fresh thoughts came into his mind as he walked silently up Glen-Mellish

with his sister, and being fresh they possessed a paramount interest.

"It was not a very pleasant visit, George."

"I don't know why we made it. Old Clucas and his wife are vulgar. How is it that in youth one tolerates and even likes such people?"

"Perhaps youth is naturally vulgar: to row, to cast the nets, to fling a trout line, to run, to jump, to swim—it seems to me these are the ideals of youth. They are mere animal accomplishments; some of them are performed better by animals than by men; but when books and travel have refined the nature the old ideals lose their place. I think you disappointed Ruthie and Mary, and perhaps Gale more than any one. You were not like yourself, George."

"I could not put down a singular line of thought. I wish I knew the man who has spent so much money on me. Why did he do it? Is he my father? Don't you see, Harriet, where such reflections may lead to?"

"If they lead to any unkind suspicions, don't follow them a moment, George."

"Oh, but, you know, I must follow them. If it was that man's interest or pleasure to put me

through the best schools in England, to give me two years' travel, and then buy me a commission in a cavalry regiment, he ought to have done more, or not have done so much. I hope my leaving the regiment will be a great disappointment to him. I would not have the thousand pounds now—no, not for ten thousand."

"I am amazed at your folly, George."

"Why should you be amazed? Is folly unusual? Are fools a rarity? On the contrary, you will find that fools are the daily work of nature—her vocation; if she makes a man she loses by it."

"To be as petted as a schoolboy! As unreasonable as a spoiled child! To affect an indifference you do not feel! To treat the turning point of your life as if you were deciding a game of cricket is wicked, I think. And I know that you have parts and cultivation; you are not an ignorant fop."

"My dear Harriet, have you not followed out my observation? Let me tell you that genuine folly is only attained by studious search. A natural fool is a poor specimen. To be really eminent in that *rôle*, it is necessary to be a man of parts and cultivation."

"I will not keep up a useless and heartless badinage with you. You pain me very much, George; and if any one else should say that you were 'an eminent fool' how angry you would be!"

He answered with a light, mocking laugh, and the rest of the walk was finished in silence. In the hall they parted. Harriet went upstairs and George into the parlour. His mother was sitting in a large chair by the window. He had not expected to see her there, and her presence gave his mood a slight shock. He had been thinking hard thoughts, and her calm, open face, meeting his, was like a sharp denial of them.

She was small and slight, with white hair carefully arranged around a delicate face. Her colour was lovely, her mouth sensitive and expressive, her eyes dark and tender. She was richly dressed, and her whole appearance gave the idea of refinement and repose.

"My dear George."

"Good morning, mother. I am glad to see you here." He kissed her, and then added, "I walked with Harriet down Glen-Mellish. We went as far as the cottage of Ruthie Clucas."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, indeed ; and Mary, and Gale, and Bella, Gale is very handsome."

"And Bella also. Her face is not of the ordinary Manx type, and many do not admire its irregularity and fleeting colour ; but I think her beautiful."

"I dare say she is ; she scarcely lifted her eyes. I believe she was making bread of some kind. Mother, I am not thinking of Bella Clucas at present. If you are quite able, I should like to get my own affairs settled. I never enjoy myself in an atmosphere of uncertainty."

"I am quite willing to discuss your affairs, George. Have you anything fresh to tell me?"

"No. I made a clean breast on Monday night. That paper of Penrith's is the worst thing I ever did. But Penrith is safe and honourable. He loved me, too, poor fellow ! I feel sorry when I remember how cut up he was."

"I would not name that transaction unnecessarily, George. Though I am not Penrith, I can assure you I have been 'cut up,' as you call it, also. And I think I love you, George, in a way that no other human being does or can."

"I know it, mother. If I had not known it,

should I have come with all my faults and troubles to you? Harriet says you think I should sell out, and pay my debts. I think so too. I will write to Jacques this afternoon to attend to the matter at once. I have a lot of Turkish and Persian rugs—they can go too; the vases and coins I bought in Rome I should like to keep, and my books I cannot part with.”

“There is no need to part with any of your personal treasures. I do not want to make your punishment harder than is necessary, George.”

“I do not think it any particular punishment to leave the regiment. It is too fine a place for a beggar like me. A young man is to be pitied who is pitched into its style with empty pockets.”

“Stop, George! You had a handsome allowance. There are officers in the same regiment with much less. I ascertained *that*, before I fixed the amount I thought sufficient.”

“Oh, you fixed it! I understood from Harriet that you had not paid either for my education or my commission?”

“Harriet told you I said that?”

“Yes.”

“I wish she had not. I must have been very

troubled to have spoken to her of money matters at all."

"Will you tell me who paid my bills?"

"No. I shall never tell you that."

"There it is," he cried. "If I did not owe a penny, I would not go back to my company! How do you think it feels for a fellow not to know who he is? There are the Cumberland Penningtons, and the Yorkshire Penningtons, and the Penningtons who are nobodies in particular. Every week I am asked about some of the lot. I don't know what to say."

"Tell the truth; say your branch of the family is in the Isle of Man."

"*My branch!* Two women and myself."

"As this conversation has been forced upon me, I will tell you now what I shall tell you if it recurs a thousand times. Ask for no information but what is freely given you; be thankful that others are willing to suffer what you must else have endured."

"Mother! have I any right to the name I bear, or is it an assumed one? This much I ought to know, at any rate."

Mrs. Pennington flushed scarlet, and, rising hastily, said, "Wait here a few minutes."

It was evident she was going to leave the room, and he offered her his arm. She waved him away with a haughty and peremptory movement. There was not the shadow of tears in her eyes, not the faintest expression of injury, not the most fleeting air of reproach in her face, or manner, or voice, but George Pennington felt in a moment an overwhelming pity for his mother and an overwhelming contempt for himself.

"It was a brutal question to ask," he muttered, "and yet it is as well asked as thought." Still, when his mother re-entered the room he could scarcely meet her eyes. She had a couple of papers in her hand, and she offered them to him.

"George, here is my marriage contract, and the certificate of your baptism. Satisfy your own eyes, since you do not credit my words."

"I will not look at them. Forgive me, mother; forgive me if you can—I shall never forgive myself."

She laid the papers down upon the table, looking at them with aversion and fear. But in a few minutes she controlled all signs of emotion, and turned them over with an indifference

that was evidently the result of a dominant will.

"The date is more than twenty-five years ago, you see, George,"—and then she read aloud, slowly pointing out the words with her finger, "'*Ante-Nuptial Contract between Alfred Saville Pennington and Martha Brougham.*' Brougham is my family name, George."

"I desire no further explanation, mother. I hope you will forgive me for the question."

"Perhaps it was natural on this subject to want more proof than my word. I do not wish to think more unkindly of you than you deserve. George, many years ago I suffered a great—I will say wrong. Nothing can ever put the wrong right—nothing ; there is no possible atonement or restitution ; all that remains is silence. The more perfect the silence, the deeper the oblivion, the better it is for you, and Harriet, and myself. I was always averse to your leaving this retreat. Others thought differently. The experiment has been a failure, as I expected it would be. Take a summer's holiday and let Jacques arrange your debt. Then begin the study of the law with Daniel Tëare."

"I have often thought of going to Australia."

"It would kill me if you went there."

"To the United States then ? "

"Why do you wish to expatriate yourself? There is no reason for it—none whatever ; and there are many reasons why you should remain in England."

"I know of none."

"Harriet, myself, and other possibilities, which I am not at liberty to name. Cannot you take me on trust, George ? "

"Of course I can, mother. I am not as a general thing inclined to go a motive hunting ; and as for the future, it is an unknown country—perhaps an enemy's country. I have had no orders yet to invade it. The present is sufficient, and when the autumn comes——"

"You will go to Teare's office ? "

"The autumn is days and weeks away. This summer I will take short views of life—and pleasant ones. I wish, mother, I could do something in extenuation of my folly."

"God asks nothing but sorrow for our sin ; shall I ask more than Heaven? If you are sorry, George, I have forgiven, and will forget.

Try and be happy in the sinless pleasures around you.

'The Sisyphus is he whom noise and strife
Seduce from all these soft retreats of life.'

"I will be no Sisyphus, mother. I will find, on the sea and among the fishers, plenty of pleasure—if my anticipations are not dashed, as they generally are, 'by some left-handed god.' Don't look so horrified; I was only quoting the *Œdipus*, mother."

He kissed her hands, and looked so bright and handsome that her heart grew light with renewed hope; and she bid fear keep outside her dwelling.

Oh, blessed Hope! amid the never fulfilled desires—the vain strivings—the unspeakable blunders of life—what should we do without thee? Perhaps, indeed, thou art a flatterer; but at least thou art a pleasant and honest one; for Hope, and only Hope, flatters the poor and the miserable.

CHAPTER IV.

BELLA'S OPINION.

'Tis our own wisdom moulds our state,
Our faults and virtues make our fate.

In whatsoever character the Book of Fate is writ,
'Tis well we understand not it ;
We should grow mad with too much learning there.

The fate of Love is such
That still it sees too little or too much.

MRS. PENNINGTON was scarcely pleased at her son's ready acceptance of the destiny which he had called unto himself. There is a kind of making the best of things which is really making the worst of them ; and she was conscious that George's easy satisfaction with her plans for his future came from thoughtless indifference and a wish to shirk all responsibility for the consequences of his previous conduct.

Indeed, Captain Pennington longed to be rid

of the past. He had mismanaged all his advantages. He was aware that an indefinable suspicion had touched his name. His comrades, in some way, chilled the air around him. He knew that he had fallen in their estimation, though no one had told him so. And without taking the trouble to reason on the matter, he frankly admitted to himself that this social fall, however intangible it might be, was generally, within a certain circumference, a final one. He was aware that if a man loses caste in his regiment, only some military miracle, only a deed done with life in the hand, can retrieve what has been forfeited, and George Pennington had no heroic longings. If a great opportunity had found him out he would have made a hasty excuse and slipped behind it in some way or other.

And though life in the little Island of Man did not promise much, he looked at its possibilities with the hopefulness of his twenty-five years, and with that faith in fortune which is the complaisant habit of youth. There was, to begin with, a handsome and well-ordered house, in which he promised himself to reign paramount. His mother's affection for him would bear such

assumption he did not doubt, and Harriet was only a girl—girls naturally submitted to their brothers. Of course Harriet had usurped many privileges during his absence ; but if he and Harriet had for the future to dwell together, he must resume his prerogatives and insist upon being regarded as the eldest son and the eldest brother. And he did not dislike the prospect of this struggle for supremacy with the women of the house ; it was a kind of warfare for which his weapons were always ready.

Then there was a good regiment stationed at Castletown. The officers would be gentlemen, he could doubtless join their mess occasionally, and, however loyally they served Her Majesty, they were also likely to be good subjects of those four paper kings whose authority is lost in Oriental myth. Besides these two sources of amusement he had his books ; and he could write verses and practise Weber's overtures.

Then there was the sea. He was very fond of the sea when it was calm, and he could drift out with the tide and in with the tide, and smoke and dream sonnets to the lazy whish and lap of the ocean. He felt that to thoroughly enjoy this kind of sailing he must find a fisher-

boy to hold the oars, and he remembered Gale Clucas, but not with approbation. Gale had not pleased him during his morning visit to the Clucas' cottage. He had caught a look which really seemed to be equally made up of suspicion and dislike.

"But I cannot allow myself to quarrel with Gale Clucas," he said, in a soft voice—"for there is Bella! Sweet Bella! Beautiful Bella!"

Then he knew that Bella was the first and the last of his motives. However many he might put before her, however much he might magnify others, Bella Clucas was the first and the last of all his intentions. He made no effort to put the temptation from him. He told himself frankly that his pursuit of her would be unjustifiable in every respect, and would be resisted upon every side. Harriet had warned him of her opposition; he felt that Gale would be unmanageable; and as for old Ruthie, if he should once become suspicious he would become dangerous. Captain Pennington admitted these facts, and while admitting them smiled scornfully at the position. It appeared after all a little ridiculous to find a fisherman's daughter so difficult to approach. But then he

reflected, "Bella is on my side, and we two against all odds."

He was walking slowly about his room to these thoughts, and in the course of this exercise he stopped at one of the windows overlooking the orchard side of the garden. There were two people under the cherry trees. One of them was his sister Harriet. She had a pale blue dress on, a dress of the exquisite colour of the forget-me-not. Her long brown curls were pushed behind her ears, a gold ornament gleamed upon her neck, and gold bracelets glinted with every movement of her hands. Her face was rosy and love-lit, reflecting the eager happiness it found in that of her companion. The other was a soldier, and wore a very becoming uniform ; and he was strong and tall, with short curling brown hair, and a face bronzed by exposure, and a smile of the kindest good nature.

"*That* is Colonel Sutcliffe, I suppose. Both mother and Harriet wrote me something about him. I have forgotten what it was, and no wonder, I was so bothered about my own affairs at the time. But there is no need of explanations ; a look at the two as they stand there is enough to tell the tale. Well, as the head of

the family, he will have to apply to me, and if he does not make himself very agreeable indeed he will be sorry for it."

The thought gave him a new sense of power. He understood that Colonel Sutcliffe, being so evidently in love with his sister, would be likely to favour all his plans and advances, and he immediately began to calculate in what manner he could best use affection so innocent and so sincere. For to George Pennington men and women had all a positive value; they were to profit his finances, or to gratify his senses, or to add something to his importance. And he gave no one credit for any nobler or more unselfish motive; his own nature being so low, he necessarily lacked the standard by which to measure higher souls.

Colonel Sutcliffe was, however, disposed to like the brother of his intended wife. His beauty, his gracious manners, and that fine polish which had been unconsciously acquired among companions who lived on the highest social peaks, always made at first a pleasant impression. And at this time Captain Pennington was desirous of making a pleasant impression. He gave to the dinner-table a tone

of festivity, and was so delightful a host that Harriet, though proud of her brother, felt a vague fear for her lover. His simple, honest nature responded so heartily to the new influence, and if it should prove to be less simple and honest than its appearance, she could feel that in some way it would be dangerous.

But she put the dumb fear down, and delighted herself in the cordiality which was so evident. "Why should I be suspicious until I have a reason?" Such a question is always more easily asked than answered, and it returned again and again for satisfaction, until Harriet was irritated by its persistence. Usually after dinner Harriet and her lover seated themselves by the piano, and, under cover of some soft accompaniment or *adagio* movement, had delightful bits of conversation, or equally delightful pauses. Then the still air seemed to absorb the tender syllables, and as the gloaming deepened the music became slower and softer, and the whole room sensitive. This was the hour their souls drew closest to each other, the hour both loved best of all, but George Pennington was incapable of divining its tender mystery, and, with a gay laugh and a merry quotation,

he boldly interrupted it and carried Sutcliffe away with him for a walk.

Harriet, from the garden gate, watched them down the Castletown road. "Why should I be suspicious?" she asked herself again, and still the answer was uncertain and unsatisfactory. She turned towards the house with a slow and irresolute step, and her eyes, attracted probably by other eyes watching her, perceived, among the standards of raspberry bushes, a woman gathering fruit. She went with some haste and some annoyance to her.

"You here, Bella?"

"Here for all, Miss Harriet. My mother was sendin me. It's sick she is, and needin the fruit, as if it was meat and drink."

"Shall I help you to gather it?"

"I said to mother, 'Miss Harriet isn' wantin me to come near at all. Likin or not likin me, it's as much as her love will bear.'"

"A word is a word, Bella; and I gave you one about staying away while my brother is at home. It is for your good; and as for seeing me, I would come to the cottage, you know—and it is for your good, Bella."

"I wouldn' trust but it is, miss; or you think

so, any way ; but a girl is knowin for herself. Never fear ! And that is natural and 'scusable too."

"Bella, have I not always been your friend ?"

"A friend shouldn' be mistrustin me no way—but there's no accountin, though."

"When a handsome man steps between two women there is no accounting, Bella. And mind this, I will take it very ill, *ma chree*, if you turn me over for George. Give me one word of promise, Bella, that you will not listen to his beguiling words, and I will believe you for ever."

"Idikkilis, Miss Harriet ! What are you freckened for ? I'm fit to cry at the way you're talkin. You shouldn' be judgin *the why* and *the for* that's not in your own heart. How can you be knowin them ? Suspicions ? I wouldn' have them, Miss Harriet."

"I see that you will not make me a promise. I will ask you no more. Captain Pennington is gone to Castletown with a friend. He will not, probably, be back until late. Gather the berries and go home, for the glen is lonely, and gipsies are about, I am told."

"What do you mane, Miss Harriet ? You're

nardly knowin, I think. Aw, dear, but I'm sorry, terbil sorry, you're so unraysonable—and shalterin your ill thoughts behind the kind past, too."

"Good night, Bella. I see you are determined to have your own way—and I suspect that George's way is your way."

"I'm intarmined to do right, allis right, Miss Harriet. And as for suspectin! *Chut!* It's middlin bad work, middlin bad. When you *know* the wrong, *traa thallure*—time enough."

Both girls were angry, for both were sensible of something more than they admitted. Harriet was indeed anxious to prevent her brother bringing trouble or danger to Bella; but with this acknowledged feeling there was one unacknowledged—a sensitive jealousy, which resented any outside appropriation of his affections or companionship, especially by a girl whom she regarded as in every way below his condition. And Bella was conscious that she had already merited suspicion; but she did not feel inclined either to excuse what had transpired, or to make any promises for her future conduct.

"Promises! Indade no!" she muttered.

"What for! There's things I wouldn' do to save my life; but it's not me that will make a promise about them. And to her! *Chut!* She's a girl, all as one as I am a girl. Havn' I seen that handsome officer; and the bend of his head, and the love shinin in her face? Quality indade! The like is at them. When it's love we are all middlin aequal. God knows it!"

The small basket of berries was over her arm, and she was stepping briskly to her thoughts across the gaery. When she entered the glen she was still under their influence. Suddenly she arrested herself and stood motionless. A little below her a figure was slowly walking about a few yards of grassy level that broke the rapid descent. His back was to her, but she knew it was George Pennington, and she knew also that he was waiting for her. She could yet retreat. She had the impulse to do so; but she was not a girl who acted upon impulse, and her whole nature resisted the idea of flight.

"What will I run for? Danger, is it? Bless my heart, he is in more danger than I am! And if I'm runnin to-night, what will I be doin to-morrow? Every day that is dawnin will be as one. And what's dangerous? The smile on

his handsome face, and the fine words he'll be sayin? I'm knowin them: 'Sweet Bella, and it's my heart that is breakin for a sight of you.' Folly! I'm not regardin such; warned afore and mindin of it—and able to hold my own, I wouldn' wonder, Captain Pennington and all."

She was saying these words as Captain Pennington came eagerly to meet her. Bella stood still, and looked with a curious tenderness at him. This was the man who, she was assured, meant to do her some great injury. A smiling, handsome man, with a figure so slight that she could not help an involuntary comparison with her own splendid proportions. Physically she felt equal to him, morally she knew herself to be his superior. "Lovin is understandin," she thought, "and I am knowin the man and the good and the bad that's in him, all of it." The thought, rapid as it was, gave a confident pose to her head, an easy self-reliance to her manner that George Pennington felt and admired. She had the influence over him that essentially strong natures have over essentially weak ones.

And in the soft grey light she looked exceedingly noble and beautiful. At that moment he surrendered everything else to the one deter-

mination to win her for his own. It was the present, the vital interest of his life, and he gave himself to the purpose with that wilful and unreasonable persistence which may be seen in spoiled children determined to have their own way.

Bella was surprised by the impetuosity and sincerity of his wooing. She had suspected its genuineness before ; but she found herself yielding as she became convinced of the truth of his affection. But she did not allow him to perceive the advantage he had gained ; a chill barrier of maidenly reserve kept him, though at her side, far apart from her. She made him feel without a word that even the support of his arm would not be taken, and that the embrace he had hoped for need not be attempted. As for the firm rosy lips, he understood that they were guarded from his touch by a sentiment of chastity that was inviolable and a will which he had no power against. So no princess could have walked with him more secure in herself, more respected in his admiration.

When they came to the Clucases' cottage Mary Clucas was sitting on the raised stone step at the open door. Her face was turned to the

glen, and had the look of one waiting and listening. Indeed, she had been watching for her daughter's return, and rightly suspicious as to the reason of her delay. When she saw Captain Pennington with her she rose, and would have gone into the house without a word had he not pointedly addressed her.

"You see, Mrs. Clucas, I have brought Bella safely home. There are gipsies in the glen, I hear."

"Aw, yes, and I wouldn't trust but worse folk than gipsies there."

"You are not meaning me, surely, Mrs. Clucas," and Captain Pennington laughed, but not as if the laughter was pleasant to him.

"The dark it's gettin, sir, and the late, and poor women havin to be early at work with the herrin comin in by thousands, thank God; so you'll be excusin us—and go into the house, Bella."

They went in together, and Captain Pennington walked up the glen with a fight in his heart. The cold anger of the fisher's wife was something beyond his experience. And Bella had not said a word to atone for it. To what purpose had he been so honourable with her? "Any

other man in my position——” he muttered and then he struck the gorse viciously with his walking-cane. He did not say what any other man would have done, for there came suddenly to his remembrance the self-contained serenity of Bella, and though he did not recognise it as the armour of chaste womanhood, he felt it to be a majesty which no man in any position could defy.

Mrs. Clucas was silent for a few moments, and Bella was equally so. She closed the house-door, and drew the wooden bolt across it; then she turned to the hearth, and put on what peats were necessary to cover and preserve the fire.

“Here are the berries, mother; and Mrs. Pennington glad to send them, and askin this and that about you. It’s feverish you are, she says, and she’s sendin you some Jesuit’s bark.”

“Berries, indeed, and what not! I’ll touch neither. I wouldn’t have my very life if I had to send some one into temptation and sin to get it. It’s throe! It’s throe!”

“Do you mean me, mother?”

“Of coorse, of coorse I do.”

“Aw, then, a saint may be goin into tempta-

tion, and no sin with it ; and if it's Captain Pennington you are manin by temptation——”

“ Of coorse—who else? Who else?”

“ Mayve, then, the temptation isn' beyand me. Anyway, I'm tired of the warnins I'm gettin about him—tired to death. When I was pullin the berries Miss Harriet comes in a tantrum, takin me quite on the sudden, and all she can say is ‘ Promise me not to speak to George.’ You know Miss Harriet—the thought in her heart and then out with it all.”

“ Miss Harriet has been kind, allis kind, and Mrs. Pennington allis kind, too.”

“ Aw, yes, of coorse. The quality must have their notions, and I was the fit of theirs—a pretty lass for the young lady to play with, and quick at the uptake, and doin them credit for all, and bringin them news and the like—just a break and a change in their days, and welcome for it, and nobody suitin them as well. Aw, dear! I'm knowin azackly now how much love there is.”

“ *Chut!* Woman's love for woman is just a fancy. Pretty and green it is, like Kewins moss, and no bottom to it—and a man between them, and it's gone like the shadow of a flyin

bird. Miss Harriet has her lover now, and where would you be? Of coorse he is all she's carin for. Why should you be more to her than the doll she liked before you? *Chut!* You're foolish if you look for it."

"And the demandin she was to-night! Her head up, and her proud ways, and the fine dress on her—high uncommon, and as cross as a cat, too. And all about her brother. Mother, I'm knowin how to take care of myself. Keep that thought in your heart."

"But the talk there will be, Bella; think of it! Kitty Gale and Jenny Callow were speakin already."

"Aw, my dear, they'll all talk while their tongues last. I'm not mindin them."

"Mindin or not mindin, there's them that will make you take notice. Gale has a black frown on his face already if the name he hates is mentioned; and who is to manage your father if he gets the notion into his head that wrong is comin to you from yander way? He was never really likin them—strangers and all! and it's often he would be sayin 'Kindness! Nonsense! We're wantin no kindness but the Hand of God, and the blessin that's in it;'

and then, 'that no Clucas was ever seekin favour from rich or poor.' And once, bein in a temper, he was tellin the lady so, and she answerin back—'Mutual kindness, Mr. Clucas ; we are all dependent on one another in some way.' And he let it go at that, but not content for all, nor ever was. And some one will be droppin a word in his ear about you and Captain Pennington, and then the high words and the suspicions that will come ! And, aw, dear, when Ruthie Clucas lets his temper get from under his foot, God knows what ! Bella, my lass, if you brew trouble, you'll have it to sup, and the ebb and the flow of it must go through your own heart. I'm not spakin of others, but surely you'll be mindin them, Gale and your father—and the mother that loves you."

"Aw, mother, do you think I'd be bringin one tear to your eyes?" and Bella kissed her with such fervent tenderness that she went quickly to sleep, with a smile upon her face. For women generally either trust in all points, or suspect in all, and Mary Clucas was thankful to rest herself in the complete satisfaction her daughter's assurance gave her.

But Bella lay awake until the dawning. She suspected all the motives of her friends, and the more she suspected them the more angry she was at herself.

“The consaited I’ve been ! The fool to think they were carin for me ! Amusin themselves they were—tryin to make a lady out of a fisher girl—and laughin together, no doubt, at the notions I had ! Sarves me right, of coorse, of coorse ; but, aw, the shame of it !”

To such thoughts nights wear slowly away. The vacant places left by those whom we have loved or trusted, and whom we believe to have deserted or wronged us, are the dreariest places in life. When the soul wanders in them it comes back to duty with the shadow of loss around it, and Bella met her mother in the morning wan and weary from such useless going-to-and-fro through the past.

CHAPTER V.

SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS.

The wise and active conquer difficulties
By daring to attempt them. Sloth and Folly
Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,
And make the impossibility they fear.

Ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to slacken and decay
It uses an enforced ceremony ;
There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.

AFTER Miss Pennington left Bella among the raspberries she was exceedingly unhappy. She was sensible that she had made Bella in some measure a relief for miserable suspicions which did not really originate with her. But Harriet had been keenly disappointed. She had looked forward to a few hours of delightful intercourse with her lover, and her lover had left her without any excuse, simply to gratify a caprice of George Pennington's regarding a horse which some officer wished to sell.

She was angry with her brother for not re-

membering her right to Colonel Sutcliffe's company; she was deeply hurt at her lover falling so easily under the influence of qualities which she knew to be so superficial and untrustworthy. "One happy evening that I ought to have had stolen from life altogether," she murmured. "It can never be made up to me. Surely George might have let my lover alone, but he thinks that every thing is in existence only for his use and pleasure."

There was the truth of her own experience in this complaint. She could never remember any time when George had not interfered with the arrangements and peace of the house. Even when he was from home his letters gave the tone to its atmosphere. Her wardrobe had been curtailed by his unreasonable expenses. Summer trips, winter visiting, the number of their guests and of their new books, had always been regulated by the amount of money George wanted. His had been "the withdrawing hand" in all her pleasures. And on the very first night of his introduction to her lover he had carried him away from her.

She had in her heart a burning sense of injustice, and Bella, happening to come first

in her way, had received more than her share of the complaint she could not restrain. Then, as a natural consequence, instead of blaming her own restless temper, she endeavoured to justify the words she had said. "*Bella was imprudent* ; yes, indeed, almost unmaidenly. George would be excusable in addressing any girl who so visibly put herself in his way." Poor Bella had that night to bear, not only the disapproval which belonged to herself, but also that which ought to have been visited on Colonel Sutcliffe.

Until nine o'clock she indulged a hope that he would release himself as quickly as possible and return to her. She wandered about, and passed from one thing to another like a key that will not fit, but the step for which she listened did not come. When all hope of it was over she went to her mother's room. She was sure of sympathy, or at least of companionship, there. And sleep was not in her mind ; she was too busy with her vague resentment, too wide awake with all sorts of threatening suspicions, to submit to its calm forgetfulness. She did not even desire that it should lock up her senses from their care.

She opened her mother's door so gently that Mrs. Pennington was unaware of her entrance. Indeed, she seemed to be either asleep or pre-occupied with her thoughts. A table was drawn to her side, and it was covered with papers. Her head was thrown backward against her chair, her eyes shut, and her hands tightly clasped together; but a glance told Harriet that she was not only awake, but awake to sorrow. She stepped softly to her side, and was touched with pity at the anguish on her face.

"Dearest mother, are you in trouble?"

"My child, I am always in trouble!" She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed with that piteous restraint that long experience of unshared sorrow gives.

"Tell me, mother."

"You cannot help me, dear. No one can help me. Forget what you have seen and heard. To-night I am unusually sorrowful and fearful; perhaps I am not well. These hours of depression come very often before I have a headache."

"The depression brings the headache, mother. The mental suffering brings the physical suffer-

ing. Let me share your grief, whatever it is. I am a woman now."

"Ah, child, sorrow comes early enough ; you need not ask for it ! And you cannot help me, Harriet ; the cup I mingled I must drink. Oh, my dear, be careful of your actions, for the cup of consequences is sure to be given you. Not even the Son of God—though accepting it for others—was permitted to put it aside."

"I am in trouble also, mother ; may I sit with you ? I cannot bear to be alone, and sleep seems ages away."

"If you are in trouble remain here, child. Turn the key in the door, and light the candles, then come and sit by me. What is grieving you ? Surely not Colonel Sutcliffe ?"

"George is grieving me, and Bella and Colonel Sutcliffe also. It seems to me as if everything in life was wrong. Nothing has gone pleasantly since George came home. You would say that he was the most delightful and the most generous of men, and yet, somehow, he manages to take every one's happiness to increase his own."

"George is your brother, my dear."

"I know that. I feel it continually. But

George is not my mother, and my lover, and my friend also. To-night he has taken away Colonel Sutcliffe ; he has made me quarrel with Bella ; and I feel sure that only George is giving you a heartache now, and preparing a headache for you to-morrow. Mother, can it be right to let George exert such a pernicious power ? You have authority and influence over him, and——”

“Harriet, I have neither. Look at those papers. They are bills which must be met. Hundreds of pounds flung away upon articles of folly and worthlessness. Either he does not believe what I have told him about my resources or he is perfectly indifferent to the humiliating restrictions you and I must practise, in order to gratify his whims.”

“Mother, is it right that we should suffer for George’s whims ?”

“Right or wrong, we must do it. That it touches *you* is my great sorrow. I am afraid, Harriet, you will have to put off your marriage. I cannot give you all I promised, and also pay these claims.”

Harriet lifted the bills and looked at them. They were for jewellery and feasts which had

been given to singers and dancers ; for carriages, and expensive wines ; for endless coats, and boots, and hats ; for rare bookbindings, for pictures, and for fine pottery and other articles of luxury.

" A thousand pounds will not pay these bills, mother."

" Nor two thousand. I told George this morning that I would pay nothing unless I paid the whole. I found these bills upon my table when I came up from dinner ; besides which there is another £800."

" For what ? "

" I cannot tell you."

" Oh, mother, why not ? "

" I should not have named the £800 at all, only that I wish you to understand how impossible it is for me to have your marriage spoken of, for at least two or three years."

" It is very hard."

" It is indeed, Harriet."

" And Colonel Sutcliffe may be ordered away at any time. If he goes our marriage may never take place. To-night he left me to go with George about a hunting horse. I did not think he would have left me for anything."

"If he is so easily persuaded, perhaps it is as well to give him a longer trial. It may be a good thing to put off the marriage."

"Oh, mother, it is so easy for you to find good in the evil George brings us. I love Harry Sutcliffe. He loves me. I have promised to marry him next Christmas. You told me I might. Can I not keep my word?"

"Harriet, dear, do not make my trouble greater than it is. Colonel Sutcliffe must wait. A love that cannot wait is worth little. Why did you quarrel with Bella?"

"Bella has behaved badly. George is bent upon amusing himself with making love to her; and though I gave her all the warning that one girl can give to another, I can see that it is useless. Bella has been twice to the house since he came home. I told her not to come at all. I feel that there is going to be trouble about Bella Clucas, mother."

"I hope not."

"Don't be so indifferent to what I say. I can assure you that if George tries to make a plaything of the daughter of Ruthie Clucas he must calculate upon both Ruthie and Gale taking a share in the game."

"I fear so. These Manx men are very proud."

"Proud! Yes, and they have a sense of morality which a breath will strain. If wrong of any kind comes between George and Bella Clucas, Ruthie would think little of his daughter's life if her good name was gone; and I would not give a pin's fee for George's life if he had to settle with Bella's father or brother. Surely, mother, you can see how dangerous meetings must be between a handsome girl like Bella and an idle man like George; especially when there is that old boy and girl fancy to build upon. I can remember how you disliked it before George went away."

"That was different. I was afraid of George taking a foolish step then—a step which would be irrevocable. He knows the world now, and is not likely to throw away all his social chances by a foolish marriage."

"Mother, George would throw his eternal hopes away for some present gratification. Do not deceive yourself in this matter. I can see that Bella is in love with George, and George, having nothing particular to do, will thoroughly

enjoy a love affair, which every one must do their best to prevent."

"I have been in such trouble about his debts that I have not thought of Bella Clucas. I declare one ought never to do a kindness. Hands full of trouble is its reward. It is only six months since Lace Corrin was at the House every day—going to run off to America—going to drown himself—and all for love of Bella Clucas. And the worry I had with the man, and the talking to the girl, and the mother coming, and the father coming, and no end to Bella's contradictions and sulks. It was a proper match for her, and she ought to have married Lace Corrin, as every one advised her."

"She was thinking of George. She knew he was coming home."

"Harriet Pennington ! The idea is absurd."

"Not so much so as you think. I have seen far more of these Manx fishers than you have. The pure-blooded ones, like Ruthie Clucas, are proud as Lucifer. The sea-kings, whose children they are, were not prouder. They think all *strangers*—no matter how wealthy they are—their inferiors. They call no man master, they are fishers and farmers, and take their living

from the sea and the land. Ruthie is as proud of his descent as an earl, and as independent as if the sea was his own landed estate. As for the 150 acres he owns, he has shown me his title deeds. They were given by the Cistercian Monks of Rushen Abbey in 1106 to Ingebrock Clucas, a noted sea-rover of his day. Can you, or any one, show a lineage more ancient and honourable ? ”

Some singular answer was on Mrs. Pennington's lips. She lifted her head proudly, but almost instantly restrained whatever impulse swayed her. Harriet looked at her with an anxious curiosity. She was sure her mother was going to say something very wonderful and unexpected, but the momentary emotion, whatever it arose from, died away, and the conversation returned to Bella Clucas.

“ I will see the girl myself, Harriet—if I can find time and any liking for the duty. But it will do no good. Love is not in our choice but in our fate.”

“ Oh, no, mother, our faults and our virtues make our fate ! Besides, do you think George capable of a real affection ? I do not. Mother, is it quite determined that he is to remain at home ? ”

"Look at those bills, Harriet, and tell me if he is fit to go from home?"

"Do you hope to keep him economical or make him prudent by overseeing his life? He will gamble here, he will spend money foolishly, he will repeat on a smaller scale his past life; repeat it in a circle which is narrow enough to ensure decided public opinion, and, as far as regards want of honesty with women is concerned, certain retribution. Do not bind him to Daniel Teare until you have considered these things."

"He is my son, he is your brother; whether he bring us shame or honour, we must do the best we can for him. Sending him from home to misbehave himself will not relieve us from responsibility."

"At least, if his allowance is continued, he ought to resign the larger part of it towards his debts."

"I think he will; but I do not know if it will be continued. I'm afraid he has lost a good and powerful friend. I can say no more now, Harriet. I am very anxious and miserable."

"Poor mother!"

"And your affairs, too——"

"We will not even speak of them while you are so troubled about other things."

Mrs. Pennington seemed much relieved by this decision. She talked until the dawning with her daughter, and then sent her away with a grateful kiss and an advice to try and sleep a few hours. But Harriet was too excited to sleep. For the first time it struck her that Life is quite as serious a thing as Death. And the voluntary act of renunciation she had just accomplished had left her at an unusual tension.

For she knew that there are no small events with the heart, and the delay of her marriage might mean the entire revolution of her destiny. "No one knows what changes may come, what accidents may happen ;" then she suddenly checked herself and said with a certain bravery of voice—"Nothing under the sun is accidental, and I will expect good from the hand of God, and not evil."

She opened the window with the words and looked out over the sea. It was sapphire blue, soft airs breathed lightly on its surface, and the herring boats were coming swiftly and silently into harbour. She stood before the great picture as before a Sovereign, waiting to see if it had

anything to say to her, and in this gentle mood some wind of heaven brought her the words of help she needed :—

Be not o'er exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils ;
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown
What need a man forestall his day of grief ?
And run to meet what he would most avoid ?

In the strength of this message Harriet went cheerfully many days ; for delay is in domestic troubles one of the most trying elements. Neither lawyers nor tradesmen would hurry for the impatient anxiety of women. And yet the delay had its advantages. They grew familiar with their trouble, and began to look at it from its most hopeful aspect.

Watching for letters was abandoned ; they found the day which brought them sufficient for their consideration. Of course this relinquishment of a mutual worry involved some self-denial, but also it brought its reward ; for both gathered into their hearts in these intervals the strength which comes from quiet endurance and the repose which is the gift of silence.

In the meantime, George Pennington took

his life with an almost provoking amiability. He speedily made friends among the officers of the garrison. The Kellys and Christians and other aristocratic families of the purest Manx lineage began to inquire about the elegant young man seen so often with Colonel Sutcliffe; and one morning, while riding, George met the great beauty, Miss Kate Dinwoodie, and was so fortunate as to forestall her groom in opening a gate which crossed her path.

She gave him a bewildering smile and a few words of thanks, and Captain George raved about her black eyes and musical voice until Harriet began to suspect his sincerity. "He wants me to infer that he has forgotten Bella, but I don't believe it," she thought. And Harriet was right, for the heart is a diviner, and always perceives the truth, serving us with special fidelity in this way, when we are judging others and not ourselves.

George had by no means forgotten Bella. The very fact that he found it so difficult to see her kept the girl constantly in his thoughts. He was always laying plans to get a sight of her face, a touch of her hand, or, best of all, a few words with her. But in the mornings

Ruthie and Gale were always about the cottage. And he had utterly failed in winning their confidence, though he had tried hard to do so. To them specially he paid his visits. He wanted to hire a boat, he wanted a boat built, he begged to be allowed to go to the herring ground with them once more, and reminded them of the days when he had helped to draw the nets. He exerted himself in these requests to be so entertaining that Ruthie, in spite of himself, often gave way to a grim smile. But he gained nothing from the men. No favour that he asked was "just convaynient." Every time he called there was more ceremony and less conversation. Generally Bella was sent with a message to some neighbour's house, and Mary Clucas was so painfully civil, and so painfully nervous, that a man must have been absolutely stupid with self-conceit not to have understood that his presence was offensive to one part of the family and extremely trying to the other.

Only one advantage was gained by these humiliating visits, but it was an advantage Captain Pennington calculated upon. The open hostility of Ruthie and Gale, and their marked want of courtesy, aroused the sympathy

of the women. Every time he went to the cottage he felt that if he lost on one side he was gaining on the other. Mary was annoyed at every inhospitable act and word; Bella reddened with anger at the slight implied by sending her out of his presence.

A few such visits prepared the way for a call when the men were at sea. Mary had gone to a neighbour's house with a bowl of curds, and Bella was sitting alone in the cottage, carding wool. He made the most of his opportunity. He woo'd the girl with that charming eagerness so persuasive to her warm, straightforward nature. He said in the plainest words that "he loved her above all women"; he said it over and over, and each time with such delightful asseverations that Bella could not choose but believe him.

She made no apology for her father's and brother's rude receptions; that would have been an act dishonourable and disobedient in her eyes; but she endeavoured to atone for it by the kindness of her own manner. And George purposely remained with her until the return of Mrs. Clucas. Then he complained to her of the unworthy doubts which banished him from

Bella and herself. He asked "if he had ever done or said anything which merited the treatment which he had received"; and Mary was compelled to acknowledge "that he had allis been a puffic gentleman."

"Then why have Ruthie and Gale turned against me, Mary?"

"Aw, then, Miss Harriet was spakin to Ruthie and to me—and I'm knowin that you were spakin to Bella on the sly like—and her father was sprung a bit at the very time, and mad at the all of you. He's havin a danger's temper is Ruthie, and Gale the marrow of him, but sulkier with it."

"Oh, Miss Harriet was interfering!"

"She was saying kind words, kind and sensible for all, but Ruthie is proud as kings and thinkin nobody better than Ruthie Clucas; and Bella is the apple of his right eye, and his very heart beating to her name."

And to these words George Pennington made no answer, for he had noticed an angry flush on Bella's face at the mention of Harriet's interference; and when she lifted her eyes they met his in a sympathetic understanding. At that moment Mary rose to light a candle, and

George Pennington stooped forward and whispered—"I will be at the Lady's Well to-morrow from sunset to dark; do not disappoint me, Bella."

She answered not a word, but he said "Good night" with a light heart, and went up the glen whistling softly, "My love is like a red, red rose."

CHAPTER VI.

FEET OF CLAY.

Be patient, my soul; thou hast at another time suffered something still worse than this.

It is character more than talent that ensures esteem. No one can be really great who has a low moral nature.—BLACKIE.

“THE day and the night and life goes on.” But the day and the night are only the cups which hold our measure of Life’s wine or water. To each the measure of the cup is the same, but the mingling thereof has an eternal and illimitable variety. Who can say that they have had two days precisely alike? And yet Mrs. Pennington felt as if the slow weeks of August were made up of a dreary sameness of waiting and anxiety.

Towards the end of it, however, George’s affairs were so far settled that the writing of a certain letter became a necessary duty. No one knew when she wrote it, but all could see that

she was watching the mail with an intensely painful expectation. For three days she had suspense and disappointment. Harriet saw that her distress was so great that she could not eat. She heard her soft footfalls overhead in a monotonously restless walk. She perceived that she had passed the hour in which society is endurable, and was watching and waiting in a solitude which enabled her to give her soul some release from the restraints imposed upon it, even by the company of her son and daughter,

On the evening of the third day she was fortunately alone in the house. Harriet had gone to an entertainment with her lover. George was wandering in Mellish Glen with Bella Clucas. In the midst of the sorrowful thoughts which possessed her Mrs. Pennington suspected this, but it was as only as one responsibility is remembered among a great many others.

When the house grew dark in the early gloaming she went into the garden. It was ablaze with dahlias and full of the intoxicating perfume of August lilies. A sleepy, old-world air pervaded it ; in the grey twilight it seemed like a very haunt of ancient peace. But the

solitary side of our nature loves the sea, and Martha Pennington turned her face towards it. Its everlasting murmur answered the restless beating of her own heart. The silence and seclusion, the pale radiance of the new moon, the ebb of the tide serenely drawn away, insensibly calmed and comforted her. A deep, peaceful sadness hushed the tumult of the past anxious days; she spoke to God softly and pleadingly, as a child may speak to a father and He answered her.

It was in this peaceful mood she heard a firm, deliberate step approaching—not the step of any of her household, and yet its echo vibrated dully on some chord of memory. She turned slowly, and with a certain fear, to meet it. A man was coming towards her, a tall, rather stout man, in the prime of life. She whispered his name, though she had not seen him for twenty years. In another moment he was holding her hand and gazing with wondering pity into her face!

“My dear Martha!”

“My dear Robert! I am in trouble, Robert, and there is no one but you—— I wrote a letter!”

"I am here in answer to it. Where are the children?"

"They are visiting—a little dance at the Deemster's, that is all. Come into the house; you must want some refreshment."

"No; I had my dinner at the hotel. My valet and baggage are there. Until I know all about this nephew of mine it is best to preserve my incognito. I am your lawyer, your adviser—tell him nothing more; I must be left quite free in this matter, Martha!"

"Certainly; have you any news for me?"

"Not a word."

"You are making every effort?"

"Every possible effort."

Then there was a painful silence until the house was reached. A very ghost of a smile flitted over her face at the door. She bid him welcome, and then led him to a small parlour. In response to her bell Quayle came trailing in with candles, and potted over the window blinds and the fireplace. There was a wood fire dying on the hearth, and he brought in more wood and swept the marble stone free of ashes.

In the meantime Mrs. Pennington went up-

stairs. She returned with her hands full of papers, and when Quayle had left the parlour pushed them silently across the table to her companion. They were the bills which Harriet had once examined with so much indignation, the record of George's folly and extravagance. Mrs. Pennington watched the face of the man who was looking them over with a sickening anxiety. It was a noble face, with that strange elusive likeness to George which we call family resemblance. And yet, to those unfamiliar with the family, there would not have been the slightest suggestion of kinship. George was strikingly handsome, his uncle had no claim whatever to beauty. George was slight and elegant in form, his uncle tall and massive. Both were noticeably particular about their dress, but George affected the utmost splendour and fashion ; his uncle's clothing was distinguished by a studied simplicity.

He was evidently a man of the world, and accustomed to look at things from a very different standpoint to his sister-in-law. The bills which had kept Martha Pennington and her daughter Harriet sleepless and miserable, which had shadowed their lives for many weeks

he regarded, not indeed with indifference, but without anger and without any intimation that he thought them a final evidence of George's utter failure in life. He glanced at the contents of each and jotted down their amounts as he proceeded with his task. Sometimes a contemptuous smile drew his kindly mouth a trifle downward; but in the main the expression was that of grave annoyance—such an expression, indeed, as a physician might wear who was diagnosing the case of a man who had wilfully brought on himself a dangerous attack of sickness.

Once or twice he glanced at the anxious mother. His heart gave him a sharp pain when he did so. The dark shadows under her dropped eyes, the pallor of her wasted face, were the evidences to him of a terror and sorrow which the world suspected not, but which he knew—a sorrow which came streaming up from years long since dead, but which had still power to darken the sunshine of the present.

When he had gone through the papers to the last scrap he laid them tidily together, and then turned his chair away from the table.

“Martha,” he said, “they make a bad list, but

not a hopeless one. He has been led into the greater part of his extravagance by the mere force of companionship and imitation. He has been in temptation, and been too weak to withstand it—more's the pity. But I am sorry you let him sell his commission."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! I am sure it was better for him to come home. When a man is too weak to withstand temptation he must not be sent into it. 'Lead us not into temptation'—that is the prayer that George—that so many of us need most of all."

"But he cannot remain always at home. And there is temptation of some kind or other in all places and conditions. Cards and dice are everywhere. Wine and women are everywhere. Even convents and monasteries have their peculiar vices, and a man could be a villain if he lived entirely alone. Do you hope, Martha, that if he fails to learn the lesson of life here, he will learn it in another life? No, no, he must conquer his faults now."

"Robert, I know my son. I dare not trust him in the world again. He must remain here, and he can occupy his time in the study of the law. Our best and greatest men

here are lawyers. Any position is open to them."

"Martha, have you the power of forecasting George's destiny? You see that I have never married. I am never likely to do so. From the saddle of a cavalry officer a man may take any position without embarrassment."

"A lawyer, too, Robert."

"For God's sake, Martha, let us keep from the law. The sight of a lawyer makes me tremble, and if George is really so weak as you seem to think I would not trust him with its facilities. Morally weak men have no more business with the law than a moth has with a flame."

A silence, sensitive with the uncle's irritation and the mother's opposition, followed. Robert Pennington broke it with an impetuous question, caused by a suspicion as certain as it was sudden.

"Martha, are you quite sure that you have told me all? *All*, mind! I must know everything. Less than everything would be a wrong to me, and a dishonour to yourself."

She was white as death, she trembled from head to foot, and laced and unlaced her nervous

hands with a piteous despair. She tried to speak but could not.

"There is more, then?"

A movement of her head, a dumb entreaty from eyes full of fear, answered him.

"There is more, I see—and worse?" He rose with the question, and went to the side-board. A carafe of water stood upon it, and he filled a glass and brought it to her. Then he also drank with an almost greedy haste, and after standing motionless a few minutes returned to his chair.

"Martha, dear, it is best to have all confessed and understood. Try and tell me."

"There was a debt to Lord Penrith. I have paid it."

"To Arthur Penrith?"

"Yes."

"Oh, but that is shameful! Intolerable!"

"You must remember that George knows nothing."

"True. But, oh, what cruel fate brought those two together?"

"I never asked—a social accident, I suppose. Arthur Penrith had a strong affection for George."

"Impossible! How could it be? Why did you not put a stop to the acquaintance?"

"I did not know of it. How should I? George had many friends and acquaintances. I knew none of their names. Penrith was one among them; he had been very kind—wonderfully kind to George; so devoted to him that—George—being—in—a—great—strait—one day——"

"Go on!"

"I cannot!"

"Go on, Martha!"

"George—not—knowing—what—to do—for—£800——"

"Go on; for God's sake don't keep me in such suspense!"

She covered her face with her hands and remained silent.

"You mean that George—FORGED—Lord Penrith's name?"

"Yes! Oh, be merciful, Robert!"

He sat staring before him with a gloomy anger—an anger that was almost despair. The room was so still that the dropping wood-ash upon the marble hearth made a distinct vibration. And when Robert Pennington spoke

again it was in the voice of one to whom speech is a fatigue. Yet the slow words were full of pity, and so soft and gentle that they required Martha Pennington to make a mental effort in order to catch their meaning and apply it.

"Why did you not send for me as soon as this crime was known to you?"

"Because—because I did not want you to know. Penrith behaved like a brother. George confessed the wrong to him, and he paid the note without a word. He wept like a child—he had so loved and trusted George."

"George Pennington is a scoundrel!"

"Be merciful, Robert! George wept, too—I am sure he was bitterly sorry. Penrith forgave him, but has never spoken to him since."

"What a horror of shame! Is Penrith paid yet?"

"Yes, yes. As soon as George told me I got the money. I got it on my pearls."

"You threw them away, I daresay."

"Let them go! sorrowful gems they have been to me."

"Why was I not sent for then?"

"I thought I could save you this shame. I thought then that a thousand pounds would

put George right. I felt that he must sell out and get away from temptation ; and then, after all, I found myself unable to manage his debts — ‘they kept coming in,’ he said. I suppose he did not really know how much he owed. Oh, Robert! Robert! be merciful to him. We cannot tell how much is really his fault.”

“You must go to bed now, Martha ; you are more dead than alive. Poor mother! Bear it as well as you are able. I am here, dear, to lift all of the burden I can from your heart.”

“Oh, Robert! I wish I had sent for you before! I wish I had trusted you before! I have suffered! Oh, how much I have suffered!”

“And George is dancing and making love I suppose? What imperishable faith and love there must be in women’s hearts! How else would they dare to become mothers?”

“Ah, Robert, there are so many good children, so many sweet and loving children ; and as for those who tear our hearts to pieces—God so loved them, dear, that He sent His only begotten Son to be their salvation. Shall a mortal mother be less merciful?”

“God bless you, Martha! I am going now, dear. I must have time to think before I see

George Pennington. Remember, I am Robert Luce to him. I am not sure whether I shall ever know him under any other name."

But before the week was over Robert Pennington had begun to think it very likely that he might reveal his relationship to his nephew. He had begun to really like him. In fact, George suspected from the first moment of their meeting that the presumed man of business was the identical person who had carried him in his arms during that midnight journey from the splendid home of his earliest memory. And although the strictest formality was observed in public between Mrs. Pennington and her brother-in-law, George's senses, being on the alert, discovered an ease of manner, an understood equality, which satisfied him that the reputed Mr. Robert Luce was connected with them by nearer ties than those of business.

He carefully concealed this suspicion. He took his uncle precisely at what his uncle asserted himself to be, but at the same time he paid him the most respectful and undemonstrative attentions. The elder man was naturally kind and unsuspecting; he was predisposed to like one for whom he had done so much, and

whose very personality was linked to his own by memories full of affection and sorrow.

For a day or two he watched George curiously, then he fell, as people generally did fall, under the charm of his beauty and gracious manners. And for him George thought it worth while to exert his fine mental abilities. He drew from every source and from every literature apt illustration, witty aphorisms, bits of quaint and curious knowledge. He astonished his mother and sister, even more than his uncle, by the fresh and original views which he took of the daily topics of their conversation.

Harriet began to think that there was, after all, some justice in the claims George made for their submission to his masculine intellect and will. She supposed men talked to each other in this way, considering it to be beyond the capacity and cultivation of women. She was in a state of rebellion on this subject before her uncle's visit was over ; continually asking herself the questions about the higher education of women, which women had asked uselessly for many a century, until the present civilisation brought them the long-delayed justice, the larger opportunities, the grander

hopes, the loftier duties which were theirs of right.

In reality Harriet did not impress her uncle as favourably as her brother did. No suspicion as to his relationship influenced her manners. She gave him the gentle courtesy which she thought his position as her mother's adviser demanded; beyond that she was not interested in Mr. Luce. Colonel Sutcliffe monopolised all her time and attentions. Her pretty dresses, her songs and smiles and conciliations, were all for him."

"A nice girl," her uncle thought, "but without a particle of her mother's strength of character or of her brother's intellect."

Robert Pennington forgot, or perhaps was ignorant of the fact, that a woman is never so generally uninteresting, so almost repulsive to all the world but her lover, as when her personality is absorbed in the supreme egotism of her affection for that one individual. To her uncle Harriet Pennington seemed to have a weak will, small intellect, and very little individuality of character; simply because she had merged her will, her intellect, and her character for the time being into the paramount desire of pleasing Colonel Sutcliffe. For her womanly instinct

had taught her that between lovers the sweetest concord is obtained by the subjection of the feminine character to the masculine ; and that such a condition is the only happy atmosphere for courtship. Matrimony, indeed, is a different climate, and has an illimitable condition of circumstances, many of which necessitate the reversion of this order, but they are generally circumstances bringing with them sorrows and cares that happy wives ought never to know.

So Harriet was supremely blessed in the sweet subjection of these pleasant autumn days. Her mother seemed to grow constantly more cheerful. It was evident, both from her manner and George's lightheartedness, that the debts which had appeared so overwhelming were being managed better than two simple women had dared to anticipate. She threw off the care of them, and enjoyed with all her heart days so full of love, so free from anxiety. Such exquisite days ! It seemed to her as if they had been created specially for this delight—days filled with sunshine and enthralling scents of the rich autumn. Such exquisite nights, set in the soft radiance of the harvest moon !

“ This is the Island of Avalon—the Isle of the

Blest 'not far from the terrestrial side of Paradise.' When Robert Pennington made this remark he was standing with his nephew on the high cliffs of Scarlett, looking at the calm sea and the calm earth. A peace beyond expression was over both. A mortal must have been without a soul not to have felt it.

"Yes," George answered, thoughtfully. "One, feels the insane folly of gas-lit gambling hells and crowded, roaring race courses, and even of brilliant ball-rooms here."

"Permit, not me, but my years and my experience, to say a few words to you, Captain. I am going away in the morning."

"Sir, my own conscience has said far more to me than your kind heart would venture upon. I am quite aware of my faults. I regret them exceedingly, especially for my mother's sake and for the sake of a friend who, though unknown to me, has been generous and forbearing. If you know who he is, sir, convey to him my sorrow and my gratitude."

The young man, standing in that enchanting light, with the ocean before him and the calm, exquisite heavens above him, looked so handsome, so regretful, so *lovable*, that Robert Pen-

nington could not resist the affectionate impulse of his nature.

"George," he said softly, "I am your unknown friend. I am your uncle, Robert Luce Pennington. I had the right to do all that has been done. I felt the right to be a pleasure. My dear nephew, in the future we will try and avoid all mistakes." He faced the young man with eyes mistily tender, and put out both hands. George clasped them with an equal emotion. Then he offered his uncle his arm, and they turned homeward together.

Soon the younger man began to talk more freely, to express his sorrow, and to inquire about his future.

"All your debts are paid, George ; the future, unhampered by the past, is before you. I am against your leaving the army. I dislike the law. I would rather see you wear a captain's uniform all your life than the Lord High Chancellor's robes."

"Indeed, sir, I am of your opinion."

"Very well, then ; what two are agreed upon takes effect. What if I could get you a commission in a regiment going to India ? There is always lively work in the Hill Stations."

"Uncle, that is precisely what I would like. I hate to trail a sword over pavements and carpets ; but to flash it against an enemy worthy of its edge is a different thing."

"Good. Suppose you join Sir John Gough ? Those mountaineers he is fighting are well matched even with Englishmen."

George was all enthusiasm. He delighted his uncle, and they parted with an affection very sincere on the elder man's side, and not altogether simulated on the younger's. Indeed, he felt grateful for the fresh direction given to his life. India suggested so many delightful things—beautiful begums clothed in jewelled silks, marvellous old cities, gold, silver, spices, and ivory, tiger hunts, harems, and houris—a hundred delights all so possible in the imagination ; all so impossible in the reality.

And very soon another thought blended with these strange oriental desires ; the thought of the Manx fisherman's fair daughter. Where was her place to be among these Indian pleasures ? For he would not give up Bella. Impossible ! So he went to sleep picturing the bungalow surrounded by spice and tamarind trees, in which he would hide away his northern Peri. She was

to dwell among the treasures of ivory and sandal wood, and cloth of gold and silver. She was to be dressed in Dacca muslins, and gleaming tissues, and the thin, lustrous silks of China ; and to quite forget, under Asian suns and moons, the little stone cottage in Glen-Mellish, and the showery, sunny, flowery isle of her birth. And below all the sensuous glory of these musings one strong, self-complacent reflection added a keener zest to his anticipations. It was this : " I suspected all the time who he was, and I played my cards pretty well. I have seen his whole hand, I think ! "

After his nephew had left him Robert Pennington was not so full of satisfaction. He had that feeling which at times has made us all uncomfortable—the feeling that we have allowed our emotions to get the better of our reason. For when the magnetism of George's personal presence was removed uncertainty and doubt rushed in like a cold wind. He went to his sister hoping to be reassured by her confiding love, and with some shame confessed that he had in a moment of sympathy and trust, induced by George's confession of his faults, revealed not only his personal identity

to him, but also his intentions regarding his future.

The mother cheered him with her approval. She thought he had done right. A sentiment of affection would ennoble the sentiment of obligation. George had a noble disposition. He would not abuse his confidence. "You have been with him constantly for a week, Robert," she said ; "have you not been struck with his many personal and mental excellences ? Are you really not a little proud of your nephew ? "

"I confess that it is very easy to love George—he has so many evident good points ; but, oh, my dear Martha, it would be a sin in both of us to forget the moral weakness which in a manner debases all his other excellences."

"I know what you allude to. The wretched bit of paper is ever before me—but he is so sorry, dear."

"But he is weak ; essentially weak ; because he is essentially selfish."

"Oh, Robert ! "

He is extraordinarily selfish. His selfishness impairs all his moral perceptions. What he wants he is determined to have ; rightly, if he can get it rightly ; if he cannot get it rightly, he

is still determined to have it. Do you understand ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ He reminds me of the image the Babylonish king saw. It was of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and its brightness was excellent—but *its feet were of clay ! its feet were of clay*, Martha ; and neither the gold nor the iron could save it. George has beauty, intellect, delightful manners, and a nature responsive to affection, but he will gratify himself, though he should break every obligation to do it ; and remember this—Indulgence is the twin sister of Guilt.”

“ If George has one great fault he has many good qualities.”

“ His brightness—like that of the image—is excellent ; but oh, Martha ! *feet of clay*, I fear—*feet of clay*.”

“ But there is surely help for this weakness, Robert ? ”

“ The patience of earthly love ; the strength of heavenly love ; nothing else, Martha, and nothing less ! ”

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

When on a windless sea life's vessel swims,
Becalmed, afraid, our God to Thee we cry.

To quell the waves such task Thou didst not set her ;
To toil on them and trust, for her is better ;
And in her perils Thou will not forget her.

She weeps, and bitter are her tears,
And urgent as the sudden fears
Which even love refused to face.

SOME people pay visits and leave behind
them a spirit of unrest which it takes
weeks to exorcise. They were strung too high
or too low for the domestic atmosphere in which
they temporarily found themselves ; for we can
but guess at one another darkly, and are
like players,

Knowing not the powers
Nor compass of the instruments we vex,
And by our rash, unskilful hands perplex
To straining discords.

But Robert Pennington cheered and bright-

ened the household into which he came. He had found it under a cloud, he left it in the sunshine. There was not a servant in it who did not divine that some danger had been turned away or some care lifted.

The Captain's light-heartedness had been in a great measure affected before ; no one could now mistake the reality of his reckless joyousness. Harriet had an intoxicating sense of freedom ; her steps were like dancing, her voice sweet as singing ; her mood gay and bright as a spring morning. She was a fresh revelation to her lover, and their wooing seemed to have caught a livelier rapture and a fairer hope.

No one noticed that Mrs. Pennington was still on the watch ; that her eyes were anxious ; that she had the air of one that is listening ; that her letters were scanned with increasing eagerness every morning. For both Harriet and George were fathoms deep in their own love affairs, and full of hopes and plans so entirely personal that there was little conversation between them. Indeed, Harriet could not talk with George about Bella. She was deeply offended with the girl, and Bella was just as deeply offended with her. And George was not

anxious that the rupture should be healed. He did not want his sister to have Bella's confidence ; he did not want Bella to come under his sister's influence. And where there is a disposition to drift apart very little aids it ; the shake of the head, the lifted shoulder, the implication that is scarcely made audible, is more than sufficient.

So the last days of autumn went gaily away. Each heart was singing its own song, and everything around echoed its spirit and melody. The sea was wonderfully still, and the young people were much upon it. One morning they left early and took provisions for the day with them, and did not return until they could drift slowly in with the evening tide after sunset.

They were weary with pleasure, and came slowly across the *gaery* and through the garden. George had left them on the beach. "He is going to meet that girl," Harriet said, a little bitterly, to her lover ; and Colonel Sutcliffe, having seen "that girl," did not express himself with any great acrimony. Perhaps he could understand her charm better than Harriet could. But his lack of interest in her annoyance caused a slight shadow between them ; conversation

flagged, or, rather, it was turned by Sutcliffe upon the beauty of the night—a subject which did not at that hour interest Harriet half so much as George's imprudence and Bella's perverseness.

"Have you noticed, love," he said, "that if ever you want the interpretation of any of Nature's moods you will get it in Wordsworth?"

"No, I have not noticed. For instance?" she asked, with a very faint assumption of interest.

"Look around, and listen, and then acknowledge how this verse fits the present hour :—

'The sun has long been set,
The stars are out by twos and threes :
The little birds are piping yet
Among the bushes and the trees.

'There's a cuckoo and one or two thrushes,
And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes,
And the cuckoo's sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.'

"I think little of the cuckoo's sovereign cry. You should hear George put it in its proper place. It is a detestable bird, without ordinary affections, and too lazy to rear its own

young. Wordsworth indeed! Milton knew it better, and ranks it with birds unclean. George repeated the lines to me. I have forgotten them all, but I know that Milton represents himself as preaching Liberty to the people,

When straight a barbarous noise environed him,
Of owls, and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs.

George said also that both in Leviticus and Deuteronomy the Jew is forbidden to eat him. I daresay he can give you chapter and verse."

"I will take your word for the bird's bad character, Harriet. But you have spoiled the cuckoo's note for me for ever. Is not that a pity?"

There was a tone of regret in his voice, and Harriet was sorry to have caused it. Silence fell between them, and they came up the garden way with the air of tired children, and were met at the door by Mrs. Pennington.

She looked like a woman who had been keeping a miserable vigil. Her eyes were red with weeping, her smiles had no reality of heart-sunshine in them, her pleasant words lacked all spontaneous warmth. Harriet felt hurt at this attitude. It seemed almost a

personal injustice to her. She believed that all cause for worry was over, and she did feel as if it was unkind to darken, either by retrospective or anticipated anxieties, these last happy days of her girlhood.

"I shall be married soon, and have doubtless my full share of woman's sorrows. I think mother should try to be cheerful, for she knows that such a look as is in her eyes to-night takes all the pleasure out of my anticipations."

This was the thought in her heart as she parted with her lover. She imagined he had been a little too ready to go ; for women are terribly exacting, and cannot understand that a day may be too full, even of love and happiness. "No wonder he wanted to get away," she continued, fretfully ; "there is a most uncomfortable atmosphere in the house. It feels as if some one had been crying all through it, and Harry is so sensitive to such influences. I wish mother would stop worrying. I am sure George does not worry, and both of them admit everything is well settled. It is not fair ! it is not kind !" So love misjudges love.

Mrs. Pennington had in reality endeavoured to be all that Harriet wished ; she was not even

conscious that she had failed, for she had been brought that day face to face with a great shame and calamity, and compelled to look at it in a variety of new and perplexing aspects. The letter she had been watching for had arrived just as her children left the house ; if they had not been so occupied with each other they might have seen Quayle put it into her hands.

As soon as they had closed the garden gate she fled with it to her own room. It was from Robert Pennington, and read thus :—

“MY DEAR MARTHA,—Any further search is useless. The grave has shut up that sorrow for ever. I feel so sure of it that I have dismissed all the men employed. I advise you to forget ; and permit me to say, my dear sister, that the best way to forget wrongs is to forgive them.

“Your affectionate brother,

“ROBERT PENNINGTON.”

The message, according to all human ideas ought to have filled Martha Pennington's heart with gratitude and rest. But, instead, it tore the veil of years from her terror, and made her look with clear eyes at the future. In the first

place she did not believe its assurance. She had a presentiment that her brother was wrong. Bodings, unsanctioned by her will, turned her sick and faint. And the injunction to forgive almost angered her. If the man were indeed dead! If she were sure that he could never injure her and hers any more, then she would cease to fear him and might pardon. But who can forgive the haunting fear that turns their daily life into bitterness? She had been longing and praying for *an assurance* of her deliverance, and nothing had come to her but her brother's private belief.

She thought little of it. She was a woman who lived much on the boundaries of the other world. The division that sunders spirits and shadow-casting men—an insurmountable wall to Robert Pennington—was to her but a veil that in some brighter moments was often partially drawn aside. She had frequently put her "impressions" and her "visions" against his most practical knowledge, and found herself correct. She had, indeed, that wondrous gift of insight which enabled her to stand upon the isthmus connecting *here* and *there*, and command the councils of both worlds; and un-

welcome as its denial of Robert Pennington's letter was, she felt that the spiritual message was the true one.

"The man lives! I know he is not dead!" she cried, in those passionate undertones which concealment of sorrow had taught her. "I know he is not dead! *Thus far* I feel the movements of his soul, almost the beating of his heart."

She was glad when the day was over; glad when the effort of welcoming Harriet back was fulfilled; thankful to hear Quayle stumbling upstairs to bed. For, as no one waited for George, Quayle was always the last to go, and she had at length that sense of solitude so grateful to the weary-hearted. She put on her dressing-gown and slippers, she unbound her hair, and sat down before the fire.

Perhaps she slept a little, for it was with a start she awakened, and an impression that some one was either at the door or the window. Her heart beat wildly; she had a moment's genuine terror. But she controlled it immediately—"George, of course," she said, as she went softly to the door and opened it. No one was there.

"He thought I was asleep, and has gone."

Somehow this explanation did not satisfy her. She threw wood and turf upon the fire, and sat down again conscious of a singular intentness of attitude. Her thoughts drifted into unhappy channels. She lifted her Bible, and opened it at the Psalms for the day. But their promises slipped past her consciousness, and she could not make personal their comforting words.

"I will go to rest," she whispered; "perhaps sleep may give me the assurance which Robert's letter utterly fails to do." She cast a glance at her bed and half rose from her chair. Something arrested her, and she kept her eyes fixed upon the heavy moreen curtains which were drawn between it and the outer wall. They certainly moved, and the movement went like a shiver from the head to the foot of the insensible couch. She felt that some living presence was there. She was gliding rapidly to the door when a man came out from the shadowy curtains and confronted her.

One glance at him was sufficient. She appeared to turn to stone. A quick, deep gasp was the only effort she made to speak or to arrest the numb horror stealing over her. The sound of roaring waters was in her ears, a thick

darkness was enveloping her. She was losing all control over herself, she was fainting—dying, perhaps! But the man made a step towards her, and a dreadful thought thrilled her from head to foot—*he will touch me!* A supreme effort of will enabled her to force back the oblivion and recall her senses to their posts, her soul to its miserable pre-eminence of endurance. For she was sure that the sharpest consciousness of mental agony would be more tolerable than the touch of his hand.

She tottered back to her chair, and leaning upon it for support, turned her face full upon the intruder. Its expression of terror and loathing was all the more terrible because it was an intelligent terror and loathing. She *knew whom* she was face to face with.

He was a man who might be any age between fifty and sixty; a man stamped with the image of sin and shame and misery—a hellish mintage which no one can mistake. He had decent clothes on, but there is a point at which decent clothing fails to impart respectability, and this man had reached it. His garments hung on him as if ashamed of their office, as if they refused to become a part of the personality who

claimed them. His countenance had still traces of great beauty, but it was marred and disfigured by exposure to weather, by wearing passions, by sickness and neglect, by every element that batters and defaces and deforms humanity. There was not a single thing about the man which could inspire favour unless you looked steadily into his eyes. They who either of intention or accident essayed this test were likely to experience a wretched uncertainty which would not be shaken off.

For this outcast still had a soul, and it looked through them. From its miserable prison-house, belied, degraded by every other sense, it still entreated through the deep-set, dark, troubled eyes a pity and forbearance which it seemed unreasonable to give.

But Martha Pennington, though she knew the man, did not consciously look at him. She was not thinking of him, but of those to whom his presence meant an unbearable shame and ruin. As this result became more and more clear to her, anger conquered all other feelings. Her face was suffused with blood, hot as fire; her eyes flashed, her attitude was that of a spirit watchful and defiant.

He saw the change, and perhaps mistook the cause, for he advanced a few steps, holding out his hands palms downward, their deprecating gesture strangely sympathetic with his bowed head and dropped eyes.

"Martha!" He spoke very softly, but his voice troubled the air, and beat like a hammer upon the heart and ears of the woman whose name he called.

"Martha! say one kind word to me—after so many silent, awful years;" and he took another step towards her.

But she retreated with an unmistakable air of anger and fear, saying, "Do not touch me! do not speak to me! Oh, why did you come here?"

"I wanted to see you—and the children. Martha, let me touch the hem of your dress."

"Not one step nearer. Your presence here is an infamy, all the more terrible because you know you have calculated on the fact that I would suffer much ere I would reveal it. How did you come? Has any human being seen you?"

"No one. I found out your room. The window was open. I climbed up by the vine

and waited behind the curtains until I thought every one was asleep."

"For God's sake go! You will kill me if you stay a moment longer. I must have time to think—to pray."

"Martha—I am—I was your——"

"Say another word and I will call the whole house. I am at the last moment of endurance. Go!"

"Talk of women being forgiving! Lies! They are the most cruel of created things—they are as cruel as devils. They have no pity, even on the wretch they have once loved—for you did love me once."

"God knows it. I do pity you. But what of my children? Will you ruin their lives as you ruined mine? And what pity is in your heart? I shall go mad with anguish if you stay here; and yet you stay."

"I will go, Martha. God help me! How, and when, will you see me to-morrow?"

"Come to the front door—at eleven o'clock."

"Not one word of kindness, Martha?"

She sank into her chair, and with closed eyes shook her head positively. For a moment he watched the wretched woman, then softly

raising the window he went down the vine as lightly as a bird, and disappeared in the shrubbery. Ten minutes afterwards he met George Pennington on the *gaery*. The young man was humming a gay song, and when he asked, "What's the hour, sir?" George struck a match and with perfect good humour answered, "A quarter to twelve, and good-night, sir." The eyes of the two men met. George felt a sudden pity and liking, and after he had gone a few steps he stopped and hailed the stranger.

"What is it?"

"Don't go too far ahead without minding your feet. It is a dangerous road at night, and you might be over the cliffs before you knew it."

"Thank you; it would not make much matter."

"Oh, yes, it would; so take care."

There was no reply, and George went on without further words. But he did not sing any more, and he thought to himself, "That was a strange thing to say. The poor fellow is in trouble—money or women, I daresay."

As for Martha Pennington, she sat with a

stupid weight upon her senses ; a dismal, almost sullen stillness, all through that bitter lonely night. But when the cold sweetness of the dawn touched the shadows, she remembered Him who had trodden the winepress alone, and to whom all the dim heights of woe were mysteriously familiar. And she prayed as souls pray in extremity ; not for herself, but for those whom she loved more tenderly than herself. She was alone, and in the dark upon the Sea of Sorrow, and all its waves and billows were going over her ; but still her entreaty was, " Save, Master, the souls that sail with me ! "

When she rose from her knees the first rays of sunshine fell like a finger of light across an open page, and she knew it was her answer :—

Go in peace this day, to the Haven wide ;
Thou shalt see His face and be satisfied.
Thou shalt know His heart and rest in Him,
With a peace that passeth thy knowledge dim :
Not for thyself alone, but for all
Thy heart has yearned for, great and small.

And some shall enter the Haven wide
Full sail on the breast of a glorious tide.

And some shall come
Sore battered and spent from an angry sea
But thine heart shall count them one by one,
Till God has gathered them all to thee.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE KIND OF DEATH.

When Work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath ;
Ah ! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Follow the desultory feet of Death ?

Stand still, fond, fettered wretch ! while Memory's art
Parades the Past before thy face, and lures
Thy spirit to her passionate portraitures ;
Till the tempestuous tide-gates, flung apart,
Flood with wild will the hollows of thy heart,
And thy heart rends thee, and thy body endures.

WHEN we consider what a difference there often is between the pitch of one human heart and the pitch of others surrounding it, we may understand easily the discords that perplex daily life. Mrs. Pennington came to the breakfast-table in a mood which could only be represented in music by the deep sadness and pathetic lament of a minor *adagio*. The tempers of George and Harriet resembled the rapid lights and easily grasped phrases of dance music ; quick harmonies returning frequently

to their key-note, and expressing easily-reached every-day happiness. In fact, Harriet was going immediately after breakfast into Castletown. She was first to visit her dressmaker, and then she had an engagement to lunch with the Dinwoodies, where Colonel Sutcliffe was to join her.

George also had a pleasant day in prospect. Bella was going on a visit to her brother's wife at Ballabeg, and George expected to join her there. They were to take a boat, and spend the day in drifting about the pretty caves and inlets of the rocky coast.

Harriet frankly detailed her plans. The success of George's depended upon his secrecy, and he spoke of "a canter with young Kelly to Kirk-Santon," and the possibility of his joining the Dinwoodie lunch party. But he entrusted Harriet with some pretty excuses if he found himself unable to be back. And it is fair to say that Harriet did not believe either in the canter to Kirk-Santon or in his half-promise to meet her at the Dinwoodies'.

When Mrs. Pennington had left the table she said : "I do not expect to see you until evening, George."

"I said I might come to the lunch party."

"You might, but you won't. Shall I tell the reason why you won't? Bella Clucas."

George bowed politely. "It is useless to contradict you, Harriet. A woman always convicts those whom she has once accused."

"George, just for to-day try to be agreeable. Kitty is expecting you. After lunch, if the weather keeps fair, we are all going to the loveliest bit of sand and water."

"All? How many are going?"

"There will be about twenty—the nicest young people Kitty knows; and Kitty takes her guitar, and Major Hamilton his violin, and as the tide comes in we shall float home with it, singing."

"Thanks, Harriet! You have quite decided me—I shall not join you."

"I thought you loved the sea."

"I do love the sea. It is the one place where Nature has her own way. But I won't join any mob of pleasure-seekers on it. In fact, I hate parties of pleasure either on sea or land; they damage everything, like flies in summer."

"In fact, no one's company is comparable to your own and to that fisher-girl's."

"I will not contradict you. A woman has a

suspicion in the morning, by night she has clothed it in absolute truth. She is then ready to assert it, to swear to it, if need be."

"I say you are going to spend the day with Bella Clucas, somewhere or other."

"You are an oracle, of course. Have you any message for Bella?"

"ME!"

"You used to be very fond of Bella."

"I loved Bella very dearly once—as long as the girl behaved herself."

"Oh, nonsense, Harriet! The girl has done nothing wrong. I don't believe you ever loved Bella. The love of women for their own sex is a mere negation—a kind of cessation of hostilities. There are no Davids and Jonathans among them."

"So you imagine men have a monopoly of friendship?"

"Yes, I do."

"You are mistaken. I did love Bella—until Bella behaved in a way I thought was not right."

"Men do not limit their liking by such a narrow rule. What if Penrith had?" He spoke sternly, his face clouded, and he turned abruptly away.

"If I were you I would not name Penrith."

"I feel differently, Harriet. I force myself to name him very often. I do not wish to forget the kindness he showed me. He has never uttered a word of reproach ; for that reason I reproach myself. Poor Bella's sole offence is that she disobeyed your orders. Had you any right to give her an order? You have known her all your life, and yet you cannot forgive her."

"Bella goes on disobeying. I would forgive her if she would never speak to you again."

"Precisely! It is as I say. A woman loves a woman until she offends her ; but she loves a man in spite of his offence—that is, if she loves him at all. She will forgive, and forgive, and forgive, and go on loving him even though he go on offending her."

"There may be such women, George."

"There are such women. They are beyond numbering, God bless them! And it is well for poor fellows like me that they do exist. There's mother, for instance——"

"Oh, I shall talk no more with you. It is quite useless, and I have to be at the dress-maker's at ten o'clock."

"Shall I go to Castletown with you? Do you walk?"

"I have no time for walking now. Laxey will have to drive me. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Say as many pretty things to Miss Kitty as you can remember for me."

"No, sir, I will not."

"All right ; I will say them myself some day."

Mrs. Pennington, pacing restlessly to and fro on the garden-walk, heard this chatter with extreme anxiety. She was so wishful for both George and Harriet to be from home when her visitor called, and every moment's delay seemed interminable. Then, after Harriet had gone, George perversely wandered about the garden with his cigar, until, feeling his longer presence intolerable, she bid him a faint adieu, and went into the house. George had been waiting for this very event. With a slow and studied *non-chalance*, he then passed through the gate, and as he did so he perceived a man sitting upon a great rock which jutted out of the unplanted place between the shore and the sea.

"I believe that it is the very same person who asked me the time. I wonder if he has been there all night." As George passed the man rose and looked towards him, and though the distance between them could well have excused

recognition even from acquaintances, George bowed politely, and the stranger returned the compliment.

"He is in trouble, I am sure. Very likely hiding from his creditors; I have a fellow feeling for a man in that fix—every one hasn't a mother—and friends. I wouldn't care much what kind of a mess he was in, I'd help him. My sympathies go naturally to the weaker side—the debtor side." He walked slowly away to such thoughts, and the man who was their prompter turned so as to keep him in sight as long as possible.

It was then about ten o'clock. In another hour Mrs. Penniugton would have to drink the cup she had prayed might not be put to her lips—the cup she had mingled for herself in the intoxication of youthful love and wilfulness. But the terror and suffering of the night hours had reduced her to a state of passive endurance. She could no longer think or plan, no longer struggle against the calamity which had befallen her. She was in the condition of the combatant who has ceased to count the blows he receives, who has no strength left with which to return them.

And yet through all this inert suffering she

was conscious that her soul was gathering strength. Whatever might arise, it would doubtless be ready to meet the occasion and make the best terms possible. She stood at an upper window watching the garden gate ; if possible she would not let her servants see her strange visitor. In case of any emergency their sympathy was sure, but she was not a woman who had ever voluntarily sought sympathy. It had been rather her habit to suppress her feelings, to habitually turn her heart into a sanctuary and therein take refuge.

This habit, which was the result of a naturally timid disposition, had perhaps made her attach an overwhelming significance to a circumstance which was really of vital gravity and importance. She was not, in the highest sense of the term, an educated woman, and she was therefore subject to those all-absorbing passions which tyrannise minds revolving in small orbits. And her secluded life had gradually turned her apprehensions and her opinions into fixed ideas. She had suffered herself to dwell in an atmosphere of foreboding, and the thing she had feared had happened to her. Perhaps, indeed, her anticipation of evil had called to her the

evil ; the soul has marvellous powers of attractions. In the body and out of the body, sleeping or dreaming, its fears and its longings find out their object and act upon it.

Even as she stood at the window letting her thoughts drift in angry tumult, uncontrolled, unreasoning, the man sitting on the rock outside her garden was influenced by them. He moved uneasily, he looked at his watch, he stood up and looked at the house, he began slowly to make his way to it. Something of her mood had touched him, pressed upon him, stirred in his soul a responsive restlessness and anger.

She saw him coming, and even in that supreme moment an unconscious womanly feeling made her pause before her mirror. She had dressed herself purposely for this interview, and she looked with a sad and cold face at her reflection. The white collar worn at the breakfast-table had been removed, nothing relieved the sombre blackness of her garments. A nervous movement of the left hand and a rapid glance at it was accounted for by the absence of the plain gold ring which she usually wore. If he looked to find it there he would understand what he might perhaps be pitiful enough to spare her saying.

She met him on the threshold, he had no necessity to knock for admittance, and she silently led him to the large parlour, a room seldom used except for purposes of entertainment. The door was closed, and they stood face to face, only the blank surface of a table between them. The man had possibly been on the *gaery* all night, he looked like it. Martha's first thought regarded his neglected toilet. Its disorder typified to her his awful fall; for he seemed unconscious of its shortcomings, and indifferent to them. All his soul was in his eyes. The rest of his face was but a battered oval of weather-beaten and passion-beaten human clay. But, oh! the misery! Oh, the longing! Oh! the imploration in those two soul-lit eyes!

Martha felt their gaze and would not encounter it. She knew the power of old, and by a tremendous effort of will compelled herself to withstand its influence. She was the first to speak, and her words were slow and heavy like those uttered by a sleeper.

"You want money, of course? I could give you a little——"

"I do not want money. I could give you a

great deal—if you would have it—honest money earned with hard, honest work.”

Her face flushed angrily, and she made a movement with her head and hands which there was no mistaking.

“Very well. I do not offer it.”

“If you do not need money why did you come? How cruel! How cruel of you to do so!”

“I came, as I said last night, to see you and the——”

“For God’s sake, listen to me! George is a soldier, will you brand him with infamy and drive him out of all respectable society? Harriet is betrothed to a gentleman of stainless name and good estate. Your existence is unknown to them. You ruined my life. If there is anything in heaven or earth you reverence, for its sake spare my children!”

From her dropped lids the heavy tears fell like rain upon the table between them. She had involuntarily clasped her hands. Her attitude was at the moment touchingly noble in its extremity.

He drew his lips together, his breath came heavily, he touched her left hand, and said in a

thick whisper : " You have removed our ring. It was there last night."

" The plain ring I wore last night I bought myself to prevent remark. Our ring was broken in two by our own act."

" Need you tell me that? Cannot love mend it? "

" There is no love left. I did not see you to discuss that subject. It is for my children's sake I speak to you."

" What do you want me to do? "

" To efface yourself; to be dead to them; to go where those who knew you once can never meet you."

" If I do this, when the children need you no longer, will you remember me? You are my wife—yes, I will say the words—they are true words."

" They are not true; and I am not your wife. Your cruelty set me free—your crimes set me free—the law of my country set me free."

" Nothing can free you—nothing! You have a conscience, ask it! "

She sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. The stillness, the pathos, of her whole figure touched him beyond tears or words. Pure and good and delicate as she was,

this degraded husband of her youth dared to love her. At that moment she was far dearer to him than she had been on her bridal morn. He would have given the residue of his life to have taken her in his arms, to have comforted her beyond the power of earth to trouble.

"Martha!"

She had forgotten for a moment. She lifted her head, and his eyes, misty with tears and shining with love, caught her upward glance. They troubled her heart, went down into its depths, and troubled its sweetest and saddest memories. The angel might be good or evil, but it had the power.

"Martha!"

"Yes."

"I will do all you require. I will never reveal myself to the children—without your permission. If you desire it, you shall see me no more on earth—if you will grant me one favour."

"What do you wish?"

"Call me once by my own name—by my Christian name. Let me touch your hand. Speak kindly to me just once—and I will trouble you no more."

"I!"

“ Do not say you cannot. Oh, remember the days we went hand in hand through Lowther Woods, the days we sailed on Windermere, and rode together over Keswick Fells. I have been punished beyond my deserts ; degraded and tortured, condemned for one wrong to suffer a life-long retribution. When Justice is satisfied surely Mercy may say one word of pity. Martha, will you say it ? ”

She rose, and he looked at her steadily. She was trying to conquer her repugnance ; and she whispered her children's names to strengthen herself for the effort. He waited patiently. If he gained so much from her, time might give him more. The absence of speech, the very attitude of waiting, was in his favour. Her thoughts moved rapidly to the end. The thing required of her was a personal humiliation. It would save dear ones a far more bitter experience. If she drank the cup it might pass them by, and for their sake she could drink it to the dregs.

Her decision made, she was exactly the woman to fulfil its obligation with a noble generosity. He had calculated upon this magnanimity, and he watched with a beating

heart its gathering influence. He did not hurry her by a word or movement, but as he watched her changing face he inhaled deep draughts of the atmosphere of hope and happiness.

When she moved a step towards him he trembled with joy ; but when she said, in soft, sad inflections, " Arthur, I ask your pity for the children—and myself," and put her hand upon his arm, a great sob answered her.

She did not at once remove it, and he found courage to take it in his own—to touch it with his lips—a kiss as reverent as that which the sinner leaves at the foot of the Cross.

" Farewell ! " His eyes looked down into hers, and their despair and love pierced her like a sword. She tried to speak, but could find no words that were at once cold and piteous enough ; and then !—he was gone.

" Gone ! " There was a sudden sharp pain at her heart. She felt as if she were choking. She rushed from the room and fell senseless in the wide hall through which her husband had just passed !

CHAPTER IX.

DRIFTING.

Apt to be foolish? That's allowed.
But aisy, aisy, the both of them proud,
Proud of each other, and very plaised
The love was at them.

* * * * *

Aw, that's the style,
For love is straight, like a little child.
You loves me, and I loves you;
So what are you wantin us to do?
Spake to the father? Certainly not.
Time enough for that, thinks they;
Or never didn' think nothin about it,
Never axed, and never doubtet,
Some way some day! The world is wide,
And driftin, driftin, with the tide.

T. E. BROWN, *The Doctor*.

ON the morning of the day so eventful to Martha and Arthur Pennington, Bella Clucas rose early. She rose singing, as people in fine health ought to do. And there was nothing Ruthie liked better than to hear his daughter's voice in the soft cadences of "Brown

William" or "Mollie Charrane," or some other old Manx melody. As he lay between waking and sleeping, enjoying his last delicious half-hour of conscious rest, it soothed him as a lullaby soothes a drowsy babe.

He was often cross and unreasonable early in the morning, but it was rarely this masculine failing affected Bella. Her bright beauty, her bright smile, her caressing words and ways, were omnipotent with the domestic tyrant. For her sake he forgave the stubborn facts which compelled him to face daily duty, and even the domestic exigencies which required him to speak before he had smoked at least a couple of pipes.

This morning her singing set him thinking, and not very pleasantly. At the "Fisher's Luck" the previous evening, Michael Morne had said a word or two, "jokin like," which had angered him at the moment and which angered him more every time he remembered them. He lay tossing and muttering to himself until the grumble gathered volume enough to be distinctly heard by Mary as she stood by the breakfast-table skimming the milk.

"My Bella marry one of the quality! Aw,

divil the lot of them—a humbugging crowd ! My Bella marry yandher fool of a Captain ! That's a big lie, and they may put it down at one. I happen to know that. Happen to know it partikkiler. Aw, bless me ! My Bella marry a stranger ! The shame it would be, and the wrong—and me to be standin by, and seein it all ! Is it a fool or worse they're thinkin me ? Too mad to curse I was last night, but I'll be owin Michael nothin at all if we meet again ; nothin at all. God bless me ! ”

He pulled his blue flannel clothing on with a viciousness that the invocation did not agree with, and came to the fireside with a face defiant of his entire small world—except Bella. When she stooped over and put his boiled herring before him, and peeped into his face, his eyes brightened to her glance, and a half-reluctant smile puckered the corners of his grim mouth.

She affected her brother Gale in much the same way, only Gale was too proud to show it. A young Manxman does not permit his women to see their power over him. He has his domestic dignity to keep intact. Gale's father had arrived at an age when his autho-

rity was as settled as that of Queen Victoria, and of course he could be more tolerant and more demonstrative. Yet, equally with his father, Gale felt the influence of Bella's bright face, and when she gave him his fish with a smile his heart responded to it, although he received her attentions with an almost boorish indifference.

When the state of the fishing business permitted Ruthie and Gale to breakfast at home it was a meal usually eaten in stately silence. The men were supposed to be pre-occupied with the business of the day—a subject not to be lightly discussed with women—and Mary and Bella did not feel themselves at liberty to break the masculine reserve which the lords of the household affected.

A little flutter of flattering attention then waited for Ruthie when he pushed his plate aside and said: "Bella, I want to talk to you. There was words said with your name last night I'm not likin nor Gale likin, and more of the same kind will be makin it rather danger's for somebody. Aw, yes!"

"What words, father? And you shouldn' let anybody be talkin of me—it's not like you."

"Aw, then, is it lies they're tellin? Say so, and I'll make them tired to death of the dirty job they're at. It's Captain Pennington—the young reapprebate—they're putting with you. Are you meetin him on the sly like, or are you not?"

Bella had a moment's temptation to equivocate, but the rough honesty and courage of her father had been strained through her mother's milk into her own nature, and she looked him squarely in the face and answered, "Sly like! Nonsense! Lies! I'm not axin the town to be watchin the walks I'm takin, nor am I hidin either my road or my company. Captain Pennington was with me in the glen and on the beach; more than once he was with me—and may ill-luck come to the hearts that could think wrong where no wrong was."

"Listen, Bella, my lass. You'll be givin no encouragement to the like of Captain Pennington; a poor scamp he is. I'm thinkin little of him, spite of his nice ways—bad at the core, and fond of sin and takin his full of it—and nothin at all in him for you to be trustin to—and a stranger, and nobody knowin

anything of the men afore him—and not religious, nor even the make-believe of it—aw, a bad lot, and plannin and schemin, and never straight on all sides.”

“Aw, then, who is straight on all sides, father?”

“I am plumb straight; and so is your brother Gale; allis sayin the thing we mane, and doin the thing that’s right.”

“Chut, father; I’m never seein the man yet who hadn’ a fault—

‘Ould David’s son
The wise he was, and put in the Bible
For the wise he was; but unfortnit li’ble
To women, and that’s the way it is,
There isn’ one of us hasn’ a list
To port or starboard.’

Aw, bless me, faults enough in all of us!”

“Not your place to be lookin for them in your own men—all right where you are; and if a drop too much, or a hot word and a blow, we are Manx fishers, and the like is at them all; and natheral as natheral!”

“As I was sayin, *the list* in all men, gentlemen or fishers, and Captain Pennington not worse than the rest.”

"He's the divil himself and all his works to the like of you—and if I hear tell of spakin to him or walkin with him I'll—I'll make you sorry for it!" and he struck the table a blow which caused every dish to tremble, and one gay basin which stood at his side to fall upon the floor.

Bella gathered up the broken pieces, and stood with them in her hand. Gale was finishing his last mouthfuls with an air of stolid approval of all his father's words. Mary had risen, and was going about the kitchen grumbling *sotto voce* concerning the destruction of her crockery and the "tempers of men."

"Now, then, Bella, what are the words you'll be givin me?"

"I'm not knowin."

"Well, then, I'm knowin—knowin them all, and should be. Of coorse, you'll be done with the Captain—him and his—a proud lot; be off with them! Bone to bone, and flesh to flesh, and stand by your own people. Isn' Lace Corrin lovin you as if you were the one—just the one woman and no other? And sayin so, and axin me about you; for honest love is like a little child—'you loves me and I loves you,' and

no hidin in the glen, and among the rocks. Do it again—do it again with that Anglishman, and I'll——”

He lifted his hand and brought it down, this time at the expense of a plate and a cup. Then he motioned to Gale to rise, and taking his cap and stick, prepared to leave the cottage.

Bella flung the bits of broken crockery which were in her hands upon the floor, and touched her father on the arm.

“Father!”

“Talkin back, is it? Aw, scandalous! Go to your work.”

“I want to say a word——”

“*Idikkilis!* I’m wantin no words. Do what I tell you, or it will be the worse for—him!”

“A good deal the worse for him,” added Gale, with a significant look at his sister; and, muttering to themselves, the two men left the cottage together.

Bella turned to her mother, for she was burning with a sense of angry injustice, and quite as ready to express it as her father or brother.

“Mother, I’m wondherin at you not spakin

for me when I wasn' let spake for myself; 'wantin no words,' my father said, and 'do what I tell you,' and the threat for all, 'or it will be the worse for him.' "

"Aw, then I wish it was in Anglan he'd kept himself—nothin but worry with him; look at the good crockery broke to his name this mornin, and your father and Gale away with the thunder-cloud in their hearts, and like to burst any time, and then trouble thallure for every one!"

"They're tryin to frecken me! Folly! There's no fear in my heart."

"Of coorse not; and the fear in your father's heart nothin to you. You're not to be freckened. Chut! When the men speak out, you know what it will be, every word hot from your father's lips, and the blow with it; and as for Gale, not many words to say, but sayin them hearty."

"You are hard to know, mother. One day likin the Captain and axin him in, and bringin the cup of milk for him, and the next, it's much if you'll pass the time of day with him."

"Bless my soul, easy to know! Easy! Forgettin myself I was for a minute or two, and then the divil had his chance, and when so

spakin up for his own, quick and ready. For it's a waverin heart I've had between you and your father—winkin at your meetin the man on Monday, and prayin God to forgive the winkin on Tuesday. Then when you was up the Glen Wednesday, pertendin to think that you was with Jenny Clague ; and Thursday frettin the heart out of me for the weakness in it ; Friday forgettin a minute and bewitched again with the sweet ways of the man, and axin him to the very hearthstone, and then Saturday callin myself hard names every hour of the day for my folly. Sunday itself watchin him and you in the church when I should be readin the prayers—God forgive me—and thus and so, till I wouldn' say if I was on my knees, whether I was doin right or wrong. But knowin for all a way couldn' be a right way that was so confusin ; for the right road is a straight one, no matter how hard and steep, and no fear of your losin yourself on it."

"Threatenin ! allis threatenin ! Miss Harriet warnin me—let her take her warnin to herself ; and father warnin me, and Gale. What for ? George is lovin me and sayin so, and axin me to be his wife, and where's the wrong ?"

"Has he asked your father for you, Bella?"

"Father wouldn' listen to him. I'm knowin directly how it would be, 'No, sir, and niver be spakin to my daughter again.'"

"Aw, then, why will you be wantin him? Not like you, nor ever will be. The differ is from the start and can't be altered."

"There's no differ, mother—love equals all."

"Folly! Talk for nothin! Put your cloak and bonnet on, and carry Mona the stockings I've been knittin for the children; the sea-breeze will be carmin you and takin the tremble out of your heart."

"You're not thinkin, mother. I might be meetin him. He knew I was goin to Mona's to-day."

"Aw, then, say the last words, and tell him to lay off Gale and your father—Gale specially. Ax him to go away—to go to Anglan, till you're both forgettin. If you don' there will be more sorrow than a few sweet words can cure."

"Threats again! I'm not mindin them out of every mouth; and you are spakin as easy as if you were sayin 'Tell Mona there is butter thal-lure in the house and send no more.' You spake like love was nothin but sweet words; and

‘forgettin’ easy to do as sleepin. It’s very hard on me, mother.”

“Bella, *ma chree*, the same for me. Them’s common words. One way or another all women are sayin them. Men have the brunt of life, and we have its heartache. That’s God’s will—and you won’t be contendin with it, surely.”

Bella did not answer, but the ‘contendin’ was in her face and in her every action. She was rebelling against the apparent injustice of the situation, and the rebellion gave a kind of majesty to her person. She snapped the latches of her shoes, and flung her blue cloak over her shoulders with an impetuous authority. A man dressing for a duel might have shown the same indignant haste. Her cheeks were flaming, her eyes flashing, the heavy coil of her bright hair seemed alive with the same spirit. It would not be restrained. The pins tumbled out, and the rippling mass fell to her waist, each individual hair alive with an impetuous sympathy.

She walked with a speed which soon brought her to her sister-in-law’s cottage. There she was compelled in some measure to control her feelings. She was not inclined to make a confidante of Mona ; she thought it sufficient to say

"there had been words with father," and Ruthie's temper was an admitted household defect. His women folk were not expected to make more complaint of it than they would have made of a wind that blew the smoke down the chimney. After a short rest she took the elder children to the beach. While they were playing and catching crabs she intended to consider her position and decide upon her future relationship with her lover.

Mona's cottage was in a rocky inlet, and there was no other near it. Bella was grateful for its loneliness, and for the long, solemn murmur of the breaking waves. There was a certain harmony between their restless roll and the restless beating of her heart. Their movements seemed analogous. She felt that the tide was not the only pulsation of the mighty sea. The shouting children were as much outside her trouble as were the long files of sea-gulls fluttering above the waters and cawing about their own perplexities. The air had the first chill of winter in it, but Bella was glad of its freshness and strength. She took off her bonnet, and let it blow through her loosened hair and fill her with its own cheerful vitality.

Far off in the sapphire streak beyond the verge of the grey coast headlands she saw the skiff of her lover. He was waiting for her signal, but she was not ready to give it. For very, very low down in her heart there was a voice she had constantly silenced. She was going now to let it speak, to listen to all that it had to say. It was a mournful thing, this interview with her slighted conscience. And how it accused her ! The reproofs of her father and mother had only been a fret compared with its stern truths.

" *You know* that there has been a reservation in all your lover's promises.

" *You know* that when asked to speak to your father he has always made an excuse.

" *You know* he has not deceived you so much as you have willingly deceived yourself.

" *You know* that he has not treated you precisely as he would have treated a lady in his own rank.

" *You know* that there is no excuse for the difference. If he means ever to make you his wife, it is as easy to tell the world so to-day as it will be a year hence."

To these and many other truths she permitted a long-delayed audience. Little slights, thought-

less words, thoughtless silences, small sympathies looked for and not received, lapses of love's duty that seem to be mere negations which she would not have liked to have put into words, she now compelled herself to examine, to listen to her heart's complaint of them. She knew then that she was more deeply wounded than she had understood. She was ashamed for the words she had not spoken, she felt that she had been guilty of tolerations which in that hour sorely wounded her self-respect.

And when a woman can honestly bring in such a bill of offences, it behoves her to make her lover walk in the sight of the world and fulfil to the letter the world's demands. If he still prefers a by-way to a highway, then she should leave him to pursue it alone ; for the end thereof is in the House of Sorrow, or perhaps in the still darker homes of Sin and Shame and Death.

Bella blinked none of these conclusions. She was not afraid of being too hard with George ; her heart swayed her quite sufficiently in his favour. But it is rarely people can come to a wise decision until the moment for it arrives. Bella felt that it was not alone, but at the side of her lover, all her permanent resolutions must

be made ; and she sent the children home and then answered his signal.

In twenty minutes he was at a rocky projection which made a natural pier and allowed her to step into the boat. " You have kept me waiting a long time, Bella," he said, fretfully. Then he gave her his hand with that calm confidence which is the marital privilege, and which it is an assurance for a lover to feel. And she remembered that he had once loved to lift her across the narrow rift.

Then suddenly there came into her mind a determination to be happy for at least two hours. " And the end of it—the end of it ? " She put the question angrily down. " In two hours I'll tell the end of it. Two hours isn' much to be owin Fate, and I'll be riskin it anyway." For in the girl's heart there was an unacknowledged doubt, a fear of her lover. She was taking the two hours to strengthen her influence over him before she put it to the test.

As she made the determination her face cleared, it broke up into smiles and sunshine, it became luminous with the light of love behind it. George instantly answered its reflection. He had an almost childish capacity for taking

the pleasure of the moment. He thought it the greatest folly to spoil the happiness of what is with the thought of what may be.

The little boat drifted on a smooth sea under Scarlett. In the great grey walls of The Stack speckled clouds of gulls were resting. On the horizon a twenty-ton cutter was lazily lifted by the heaving sweep that broke on the buttresses of the Calf of Man. There was not a sound but the ripple around the boat, the distant booming of the muffled sea, or the warning cry of some motherly guillemot.

They drifted close in to the land. The water was clear to the bottom. Lovely bits of seaweed pushed their fronds to the surface, and Bella let her hand drop and ripple the water around them. The sea was ringed with azure, the land veiled in a purplish haze, showing through it the dark masses of South Barrule and the limestone cliffs of Castletown shore. All the enchantments of the North were over the Island, and the pensive charm of autumn—its subdued lights and adorable air of mystery and silence.

The impetuous and angry mood which had dominated Bella when she left her home had

expressed itself in the careless independence of her dress. She had made a pretty garment for this very day, but she scorned to wear it. However, the most refined taste has discovered since Bella proudly wore her blue flannel dress that it is one of Beauty's most becoming costumes. George Pennington had already discovered its possibilities. He knew that it formed a most effective background for the milk and roses of her fair skin—that it matched the blue wandering veins, and contrasted, as nothing else could, the glory of her red-brown hair. He thought, also, that the large blue flannel cloak wrapped her noble figure like a royal mantle.

But he threw its hood backward. He liked to see the wind blowing in her hair and the sunshine turning it into strands of gold. It was yet instinct with contradiction, and inclined to the most picturesque disorder. Never had Bella looked so altogether lovely and desirable. He spoke to her in those low, passionate tones which convince women in defiance of their will and their judgment. He gave to the sweet platitudes and trivialities of love infinite freshness and interest. For one hour at least the blown wet face of the sea caught the reflection

of two human faces perfectly beautiful and perfectly happy. The delightful dream was broken by a voice as imperative as that of love—the voice of hunger. Then George lifted a basket and placed it between them, and they ate from its dainties with the freedom and keen enjoyment of two children.

“Oh, the sea! The sea!” cried George, as he sat smoking afterwards—smoking and holding Bella’s right hand in his left—“Oh, the sea! and the pulse of its tide! and its quiver and beat! and the freshness of its wind! and the salt of its foam on the lips! Bella, the great mother of the world is the sea.”

“Aw, then, a cruel mother—fed with the lives of the good men doin their daily duty—pleasant at times, like the now, but allis slantin off into storm and trouble. If the wind would rise a trifle, and come down as it can from the north, you’d find it very bewildrin, near as we are to the land.”

“Chut! It would only need shoulder and wrist and hand. I like a taste of fierce fresh weather, when the gunwale dips and rakes, Bella, and the pennant flies straight, and the rain is in the face, and the face in the teeth of the wind.”

"You didn' know what you was afther when you made yourself a soldier. It is the sea you should be on. The fond you are of it! amazin, the fond! My father and Gale are fishers, but not lovin the sea as you do."

"They do not even think of it as I think of it. What it may do to them, and how they may get even with it—what they can make out of it, and how sails and ropes may baffle its anger or make it serve their ends—they know all that. But they would not go to sea for pleasure. They would not care to drift idly about with wind or tide as we are doing—drifting, drifting, drifting, with no object but to be alone and happy."

One word startled her—"drifting."

"Driftin, driftin, and God knows where," she muttered; "slow or fast the end must come, and has come, God help me!"

"What are you talking about, Bella?"

Then she told him all that her father and mother had said, and she warned him of their anger, "not wantin trouble for any one," she added sadly; "and father and Gale are danger's. Father may talk his anger down, but Gale's quite [quiet], and it's the still men that use the knives they carry."

George listened with all his mind. He was thinking rapidly while Bella was speaking, and he was in earnest, for all his senses were very much so. He must give her up or take her entirely to himself. It had come to that point, for he saw plainly that she would not again disobey the positive command given her. For Bella's fears, as well as her conscience, were aroused. Whatever her father might do, Gale made no idle threats. Any meeting now would be shadowed by fear, and very likely followed by tragedy.

This, then, was to be either the end of their love or its beginning under fresh circumstances. A crisis had come which George had often contemplated. He was now to test the strength of his influence over Bella—to find out how far her love for him would carry her. He was going to make an unrestrained and unrecoverable claim upon it, and he looked at her with an uneasy scrutiny, "*Would she meet it?*"

CHAPTER X.

THE HEART OF BELLA CLUCAS.

I can forgive a foe,
But not a lover and a friend.
Treason is there in its most horrid shape
Where trust is greatest ; and the soul resigned
Is stabbed by her own guards.

Where, when the gods would be cruel
Do they go for a torture ? where
Plant thorns ? set pain like a jewel ?
Ah, not in the flesh ! not there.

The rack of earth, and the rods
Are weak as foam on the sands ;
In the heart is the prey of the gods,
Who crucify hearts, not hands.

BELLA'S narrative had been delayed by questions and remarks longer than either dreamt of. When she ceased speaking George saw by the light on the water that the afternoon was advancing. His eyes were full of speculation, but not so full but that he perceived a suspicious-looking little yacht in their wake. Bella saw it at the same moment.

"Look to the aesthard," she said ; "are you knowin the boat?"

"It is Dinwoodie's—I feel sure." Then in obedience to that instinct which makes us talk of trivial and irrelevant things when the mind is burdened with some weighty or sorrowful subject, he added : "He says he carried that yacht in his head for twenty years. It would have been a mercy if he had kept her there."

"Will she pass us? She can if she wishes."

"I was thinking of that. There is the little inlet round that point, and the pretty bit of sand, or the gorge for a walk. We can reach it in ten minutes, and we can talk better there than at sea. I have something very serious to say to you."

"At sea one is out of sight and hearin—and the yacht may know the inlet. She looks as if she did."

"Perhaps she does ; but Dinwoodie hates what he calls going into 'holes.' Castletown Bay is too small for his cockle-shell, his idea of an anchorage for it is Leith Roads—or the basin of the Mersey. He wouldn't dream of Vorg inlet."

They had been sitting face to face, George resting upon his oars, letting the boat rise and fall to the gentle set of the outgoing tide. But Bella now took the tiller, and George sent the little craft spinning through the smooth water at a speed which brought them quickly to the Vorg inlet. And as it had been used by smugglers, there were several conveniences there for fastening boats. Like the majority of such little bays it not only spread out in a pretty expanse of land-locked sand, it also wound inland by many a turn, so devious that every tiny level seemed to be the end of it; until some half-hidden footpath was discovered which led around the rocks, or through the gorse to another secluded reach.

It seemed to George that no place on earth could be more suitable for putting the question to Bella which he was now determined to risk. He gave her his hand and led her with many a sweet and merry word and many a loving glance to the second reach. Here they could not even see the ocean.

They were in a rocky cup, the sides of which were lovely with ferns and blue-bells and Our Lady's fingers. There was the scent of rose-

mary in it, and the delicate fragrance of dying herbs. The turf was soft to their feet, the ocean murmur haunted the silent place like a spirit voice.

The road to it was a little steep, and the day warm for the season, so Bella had taken off her cloak. George looked at the flush in her face, the light in her blue eyes, the radiance that seemed to emanate from her bright hair, and felt the enthrallment of her physical beauty as he had never done before. But this was not her only charm, she complemented his nature fully in other respects. For though George was mentally clever, it was merely acquired cleverness. He had bought his knowledge as he bought his clothes ; mentally he had less originality than Bella. And though he did not recognise or acknowledge the fact, Bella's strength of will, and the noble key to which her whole life was set, filled him with that vague admiration which the weak always feel for the strong.

There was a moss-covered stone in the bottom of the cup, and they sat down upon it, "Do you know that we are really in fairy land?" asked Bella, a little solemnly. "Danny Fell

and his sister Onca saw the 'little people' here no further gone than last March. The children—God save them!—were comin for the first violets, and delayed; they were playin a bit, and huntin the flowers a bit, and so on till the twilight. And up there among the alders Onca came upon a washin of fairy linen spread out to dry—it's thrue I'm tellin—and saw two little people turnin the things that were no bigger than doll clothes, and finer than spider webs for all."

So far George had suffered her to proceed without remark. He was dreaming his own fairy tale, and wondering how to tell it best. But he soon grew impatient.

"Nonsense!" he interrupted. "There are no fairies."

"The innercent children were sayin so, and I was seein them myself when I was a little one—not now, of coorse! Eyes that have looked on sin and sorrow grow dim. It's none but the pure in heart can be seein the 'good little people.'"

"Bella, there is a world fairer than fairy world, full of splendours and pleasures you have never even dreamt of. I spoke to you once or twice about India——"

"I wasn' regarding much, knowin' it far away—but a dream like! The gold, and the jewels, and the grand ould cities, and allis sunshine and flowers and fine scents! And the house we were to have in the shady garden, and the fine dressin, and all a puffic fairy life, but never for the like of me."

He took his text from her disclaimer and insisted upon the reality of the prospect. He was vitally interested on this subject, and he spoke with the passionate eloquence of a lover whose hopes and aims and feelings and intellect have all set themselves to the accomplishment of one end. Into the cool freshness of that green glen he brought the sensuous, languorous atmosphere of Indian spice gardens—the splendours of Indian courts—the excitement of Indian garrison life—the enchantments of a flower-hid home, into which only the fondest love was to enter.

Bella's interest gradually kindled until it answered his own. Her sympathy made him really eloquent. She was at last as enthusiastic as he could desire; and when he said, "It is high time, Bella, that we were getting ready for our journey," she looked at him with

a face in which there was nothing left of doubt or regret.

"We must go first to London. There are people in London whose business it is to furnish precisely the kind of clothing requisite for the Indian climate. They will make you the most exquisite linen and gowns—white gowns, Bella, fine and filmy as the fairy linen which Dan and Onca saw—white, with bows of pale pink and blue satin ribbons. You will have lovely laces, and gipsy bonnets trimmed with violets, and hosiery of lisle open work, and shoes with soles as thin as your finger-nail. And how beautiful on your round, milk-white throat will be the gold chain I shall buy you! and the bracelets for your arms, and the rings for your fingers—sapphire rings to match your eyes; ruby rings to match your lips; pearl rings to match your firm white teeth. I think, indeed, when I see you dressed as you ought to be dressed I shall fall down and worship you. Oh! Bella, my girl of gold! My treasure of maidens! What a life of joy we shall lead!"

Bella did not conceal her delight. "I have wanted beautiful things," she said—"wanted to look lovely for your sake."

"It is Thursday afternoon—the boat sails from Douglas to Liverpool on Saturday. It will be easy for you to make a little trouble at home to-night, and then, in consequence of it, go to Douglas to-morrow. Leave a note saying you intend staying with your aunt a week—till the trouble gets over. I will take care your father and mother see me late on Friday, and then after midnight I will ride into Douglas and be on the Liverpool boat to meet you when you come on board. Here is my purse, darling—you know you must have money—and all that I have is yours."

It was an elegant purse of silk and gilded beads, and the sovereigns glinted through it as he put it in her hand. She let it fall through her fingers as if it burnt them, and it lay on the sod at their feet.

"You must have money, Bella ; my money is yours, and you will take it, dear."

"The need? My father will be givin me money if I want it—till I am your wife."

"But your father will not let me marry you if he knows it."

"Be axin him plain out. Tell him about India, and the way you are wantin me to go.

The right it is, and the raysonable, and what every father's expectin—of coorse !”

“Bella, this is one thing you must trust me in. Can't you trust me, darling? I happen to know that your father and Gale have both vowed that you shall not marry me.”

“Aw then, who was tellin you? Ask my father; it is your puttin him by that is angerin him. That was the word he was throwin in my face allis—that you were feared to ask him.”

“Nothing will come of asking him but trouble. We must get married, and then he will forgive us.”

“A girl is likin to be marriest among her people.”

“But think, Bella, what trouble we may prevent. Your father and Gale will be setting every fisher on his head. You will have no peace night or day. Harriet and mother will be equally as unreasonable. Harriet will be down at the cottage to scold you.”

“Aw, then, I needn' lizzen to her.”

“And mother will send for you to the House, and cry and plead.”

“I needn' go to the House.”

“And between you and them all, what a time

I shall have ! Now, if we go away quietly, when the thing is done it is done ; and what can they say about it ? ”

“ You mean when we are married ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then when and where shall we be married ? ” She looked into his eyes as she asked the question, and George was troubled by the clear, straight look.

“ Well—it depends.”

“ What time does the boat sail from Douglas ? ”

“ At ten o'clock.”

“ Then we could be married at Douglas ? ”

“ No, that would be impossible. As we have not been called in church for three Sundays, we must have a licence from the Bishop or the Governor.”

“ You were sayin the Governor was your friend—ask him for a licence.”

“ The very worst person to ask ; he would go at once to my mother.”

She was watching him with an almost startling scrutiny ; but he was gazing intently on the ground, as if deeply exercised with the possibilities and difficulties of the situation.

"In Liverpool, how can you manage any better?"

"We shall be in the same predicament there. In fact, we cannot safely remain in Liverpool. Your father and Gale are almost certain to follow us there. Until we reach London we cannot rest. There we shall be perfectly safe."

"The far will be nothin to Gale if he is intarmined to find us. And what will I do in London without my mother or my kin to shalter me? People would be thinkin ill of me, and I deservin it. The questions they'd ask, and the way they'd look! Oh, I'm knowin it all."

"But I should be with you, Bella. Do you think I should leave you for a moment? I know exactly where to take you—a quiet old house looking into gardens, and a nice old lady who will be as respectful to you as if you were the Queen herself. I shall tell her that you are my wife, as indeed you are in the sight of God; and as for the form of the thing, we will have that attended to as soon and as quietly as possible."

As he spoke she withdrew her hand from his, but he did not notice the action. He was still looking intently upon the turf—or perhaps at

the purse lying upon it, and which he did not lift, because he still hoped that Bella would need and accept it. This acceptance of his money would mean her submission to his will ; it was good policy, therefore, to give the significant symbol as little importance as possible.

He felt that he was in a position where a word too far, an action too precipitate, would be fatal to his desires. He knew Bella's quick temper and its ready modes of expression ; he was therefore pleased and surprised at her calm and reasonable discussion of his proposal. The withdrawal of her hand meant nothing to him. He was so occupied with noting every inflection of her voice that this expressive gesture escaped his notice. But he was conscious of a change when she spoke next :—"Are you manin that I would be takin your name, before God and man gave it me ? "

"I give it to you, Bella."

"That's beyand your power. I'll be kapin my own name, of coorse, till I've the right to yours."

"But listen, Bella ; I can only take you to my home in London as my wife. To be with

me under your own name would cause scandal, and I must preserve my wife from even a suspicion of wrong."

"To be with you—and me not married to you—of coorse scandal; and couldn' miss it—and didn' ought to!"

"Bella, don't be absurd; a girl of your sense. You are my wife now. God and I have heard your promise. A few words and a ring, how can they make you more so?"

He spoke irritably. He was really angry at Bella making objections after all his patience and his eloquence. He felt as if in some way she had deceived him. And ere he had finished speaking he became aware that Bella also was angry.

She had risen from his side, and when he lifted his eyes to her he saw what frightened him. All Bella's blood had fled to her heart, her face was white as milk and stern as granite. And yet her angry soul imparted to it a strangely luminous aspect. She stood before him in a white cold light, just as he had often seen her in one of tender rose or golden radiance.

"What is the matter now, Bella?"

"You are *not* axin me to be your wife,

George Pennington, and I'm just findin you out, sir."

"Upon my honour !"

"A poor oath. On your lips it is lies! I'm not regardin it."

"Bella !"

"My name is soiled if you speak it. Say it no more. Do not touch my hand. No, I will not listen to you."

"Bella, I was just trying you. I'll marry you at St. Mary's, in Castletown, before all the world. Don't go, Bella."

"You were 'tryin' me? that is, you were doubtin me. If I was wicked as Jezebel I am too good for you. And why wouldn' you marry me before the world? What God sees the world may well be seein. But I wouldn' marry you, not if you sought me till your hair was grey. The insult you've put between us! It's a deep gulf—desperate deep! You'll never cross it; never, never, never!"

"Oh, remember, Bella, what we have been to each other!"

"I'll remember nothin but them last words. Up or down, young or old, I'll never forget them."

The majesty of outraged love and virtue gave to her person, her voice, her unconscious dramatic poise, an authority not to be described. She was positively splendid. From the arch of her scornful eyes she sent him a look which he was not able to endure. He sat cowering on the rock at her feet, with his head in his hands. But he could not let her go with this hopelessness for the future ringing in his ears. He forced himself to confront the angry girl, and said penitently, "Forgive me, Bella, it was a mistake, a moment's mistake."

"No, no, no ! If the devil had took you on the sudden, unknowned like, may've I might—the Lord knows—but it's weeks back you've been plannin and plottin gradjal, climbin inch by inch, as the devil bid you, to the sin wanted. Thinkin to lift me off my feet with your fine words and promises ; and then, God help me ! I was to trip and fall, fall lower than yourself—fall to the bottomless pit. My father was tellin me allis that you were a villain ; you are worse than he priced you at. The wicked you are, the cruel, the cowardly, to try and slay a girl's honour with her love. Aw scandalous !"

She lifted her cloak and turned from him, but

in a moment her steps were arrested. Colonel Sutcliffe and Harriet Pennington were standing a few yards away, Miss Dinwoodie and Lieutenant Greyson just coming into sight. Others were doubtless behind. Colonel Sutcliffe advanced rapidly, saying: "Miss Clucas—George. We have, I fear, intruded; unintentionally, however."

"Bella! You here! Alone with Captain Pennington! I am astonished at you!"

And Miss Pennington looked astonished, and angry also. But when one is under the surgeon's knife the prick of a pin matters little. Bella was hardly aware of the reproof, and she did not answer it. A momentary glance at the intruders, a glance at once appealing and defiant, was the only evidence that she consciously acknowledged their presence.

Lieutenant Greyson had gone back to the rest of the party; Kitty and Harriet stood together; Colonel Sutcliffe was speaking in a low voice to George. Bella felt for all her surroundings the most supreme indifference. She was possessed by her own sorrowful and indignant spirit, and it gave her the privilege of supremacy. Such trifles as class distinctions or

the opinion of the smiling, curious crowd around her, sank far below the tide of her calculation. She looked beyond George, and he did not look at her ; but Colonel Sutcliffe's kind eyes were full of pity for the beautiful girl. He even forgot her beauty, he saw only that her flesh and blood was for the moment spiritualised, that it radiated at every invisible point an atmosphere of anguish and indignation.

She did not hesitate more than a minute as to her course, but the uncomfortable tension made it appear more. The way up the hill was the longer way, but it was lonely, and she resolved to take it. The momentary temptation to brave the slant looks and low laughter which might accompany her to the boat she put down with the thought. It was a spurious bravery, one possible to the lowest nature ; it had Bella's contempt as soon as it presented itself.

Solitude, solitude, space and silence to wring her hands and sob aloud—that was the imperative cry of her wounded heart, and she listened to it. With rapid steps she crossed the small inclosure and passed behind the wall of gorse

which hid the upward road. In her direct path lay the purse of sovereigns which she had refused to hold in her hands ; with a conscious indignation she put her foot firmly on it, and even at the moment she heard her soul whisper sweetly, "How much better under your foot than in your hand !" And she walked proudly onward to the comforting whisper—it was like the stir of music to the marching soldier.

"Thank Heaven the girl is gone ! After all we have done for her ! What base ingratitude ! What——"

"Be quiet, Harriet ! Bella did as much for mother and you as you did for her." George spoke with dull anger, like a man scarcely conscious of his words.

At this moment Miss Dinwoodie perceived the purse, and she offered it to George. "I am sure it is yours," she said pleasantly. "To lose your purse and quarrel with your sweetheart in the same hour is a trouble too many. People often quarrel with their sweethearts—it always ends right. You have recovered your purse ; take it for a good omen."

"How kind you are, Kitty. You don't know how kind you are."

"Come, George, you have kept every one waiting long enough."

"They need not wait for me, Harriet, I am not going home with them."

And from this position George would not be moved. The rest of the party were sitting on the turf, or rocks, at the entrance of the dell, amid forced laughter and badinage waiting the end of the drama. Kitty and Harriet joined them. Colonel Sutcliffe only delayed long enough to say, "George, why don't you follow her? Make haste. You can surely overtake her on the *lhergy*."

"Thank you. I will. I had forgotten—get the girls away. I hardly know what I am doing."

In a few moments he was alone, and then he followed Bella with fleet footsteps. But a woman's walking to some vehement feeling is difficult to keep step with, much less to overtake. George did not see her until he stepped upon the *lhergy* (high unplanted place) and then only very far off—a swiftly-moving figure, deaf to his calls and beyond his reach.

Indeed, she was not only obeying the imperative need of her restless heart by her rapid

walking, she was also anxious to reach her home and bespeak her mother's sympathy before the return of her father and Gale. But in this desire she was disappointed. When she entered the cottage she found them already there. Her mother was spreading the cloth for the evening meal, and Ruthie sat in his big chair on the hearthstone, examining his almanac and humming snatches of an old Manx ballad concerning the fight between Ivor and Roderick. Gale was studying the lines on paper of a new boat which he intended to build.

"I like the lines," said Gale, "she'll be wonderful weatherly—aw wonderful !

They're makin me laugh—
Them chaps with their yachts, the onaisy they are,
And the delicate, and the particular !
Chut ! the trim is in the boat ;
Ballast away ! but the trim's in the float,
In the very make of her. That's the trimmin !
And by gough, it's the same with men and women.*

Bella ! Bless my soul ! what is the matter with you ?"

"I'm sick, Gale, and havin a turn. I'll be spakin in a minute or two."

She went into a little shed where there was

* "The Doctor."

always cold water, and splashed it over her face and throat and arms, and then drank a deep draught. Her mother watched her with pitiful eyes. "You've had a trouble, Bella. Oh, *ma chree*, you've had a trouble!"

"A bitter cup to drink, mother; and when I've spoken to father and Gale, send me to my bed. It's alone, alone, I want to be; needin peace more than food or drink, or even the kind word."

"Alone you shall be, Bella—alone till you're wantin your mother, *ma chree*, and then there's my heart to bury your sorrow in, and my tongue to spake for you."

Bella laid her cheek against her mother's cheek, and holding her hand they went together to the sitting-room.

"Father."

Ruthie put down his almanac and took off his spectacles and looked into his daughter's white face with a curious anxiety. "My lass, what is it?"

"Father, I want to tell you, and Gale, and mother,"—she turned to Gale as she named him, and held tighter her mother's hand—"father, I want to tell you all a true word. You bid me

never speak to Captain Pennington again. I spoke to him to-day, but I promise you never more ; never while the tide swells or the moon shines."

"My lass! My lass! I've been afeared of him, mortal. But if you'll stand to that, the happy you'll make me ; you can' tell the happy!"

"I'll stand to it."

"The for?" asked Gale, laying down his papers and going to Bella's side. "The for? What has he done to you? What has he said?"

"He's done nothin, Gale, and what he said I answered. There isn' one word owin. But I feel as if I had paid him with my life blood. I must go away—never name him in my hearin—I don't know him—*Mirrieu! Mirrieu!* dead! dead!" She put her head on her mother's breast and shuddered from head to foot.

Ruthie stood up and kissed her. He took her in his arms and kissed her again, looking into his wife's face with an understanding sympathy. Then Mary went with her daughter to the small room which was her own. She loosened her clothing, unshod her feet, and

helped her, as if she had been a little child, to rest. And rough as the men were, they understood that there was a great sorrow in the house, and they were capable of saluting it. They spoke in whispers, they set their cups down gently, and moved about the room as quietly as if Bella's life depended upon their silence. And by-and-by they went to bed and fell to musing and sleeping and dreaming, each after his own fashion. But the mother sat watching over the smouldering peats—watching and keeping the vigil of sorrow with her suffering child.

For Bella was suffering as only such splendid vitality can suffer. Every pulse was an agony ; her heart felt as if it had been really crushed and rended—she had the physical pang of heartache. With hands tightly clasped and eyes wide open she lay enduring, while her soul went sadly through all the dim vast rooms of Memory, making broken moans as it went, in pity for herself.

Alas! alas! the bitter hours of such soul-wandering within hopeless sight of hope. It was a lifelong night. She was so weary with thought that she would fain have steeped her

soul deep in sleep. And she bore it alone. She would have no human comforter, and in that extremity God seemed to have forgotten her. She whispered a few formal words from the Evening Service, but the use and wont of supplication availed her nothing at this hour. She knew in her soul that this vain prayer would fall from out her prayers. She was learning the lesson most mortals have to learn, that some way, some day, God, for reasons infinitely kind, sows the path of Love with thorns.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. PENNINGTON'S PERPLEXITY.

We also have sometimes lain asleep
In the blessed Chamber of Peace :
Too weary to wrestle, or watch, or weep,
For a while the struggle must cease.

We give thanks for the weakness that makes us lie
So helpless and calm for a while,
The roar of the battle goes hoarsely by,
And we hear it in dreams, with a smile.

FINDING it impossible either to gain Bella's attention or arrest her steps, George Pennington turned back to the spot at which the miserable interview had taken place. He was altogether in too great a tumult of feeling to come to any mental estimate regarding his conduct. But the power within him had already given its strict verdict, even by his own lips. For his very footsteps kept time to the slow or impetuous utterance of the only word which he could say : " Fool ! Fool ! Fool ! "

Now that Bella was lost, she appeared to him the supremely desirable thing in life. Her little gaucheries, her doric patois, the simplicity of her dress—things that had often given him a passing annoyance, became but part and parcel of a humanity exceeding sweet and beautiful. He could get no comfort from any attempt to depreciate the treasure he had so wickedly and cruelly flung away.

She had told him a thing also which he could not deny. However scandalous and wicked the act, it was quite true that he had tried to slay her honour with her love. He knew that he had been guilty of an infamy that ought to make him hateful in the sight of every gentle and honourable man.

He recalled, with a kind of wonder at his own stupidity, the look upon her face at the beginning of that shameful interview—the set, stern expression of her knitted brows, the look of moral measurement in her eyes, which he had felt but not at the time comprehended. It was clear to him now that when the purse dropped from her fingers she had become suspicious of his intentions and jealous and watchful of her own honour.

In the irritation of his self-accusing it was some comfort to have Harriet and "the whole giggling, blundering crowd" to vent his wrath upon. He felt sure that Harriet had recognised Bella and himself, and seeing them land at Vorg inlet, had persuaded the party to visit the fairy dell. He remembered then that it had a certain reputation among young people for a wishing-well which bubbled up among the ferns and rocks and had for lovers some magical quality. Harriet had doubtless used this pretext to lure the company, and to carry out an ill-natured plan for making trouble between Bella and himself. And it is so decidedly unpleasant to be angry with one's own conduct, that there is no wonder George nursed this idea until he shifted all blame for the miserable situation to his sister.

"If she had not come Bella would not have hurried away. He would have found out arguments to pacify her. He would have held her feet with his entreaties. He would have kissed his pardon from her lips." And he would not think that he had committed an unpardonable offence. He told himself that it was in the very nature of women to believe in men whom they

had detected, and continue to love those whom they had seen to be unworthy of love.

He still called himself "Fool!" but with less passionate conviction; for he was now certain that if other people had not interfered he would have gained his uttermost desires. His heart was so naturally weak that he was incapable of believing in a woman's power to resist a temptation which appealed so powerfully to his own senses. He dared to imagine a moment when Bella, having satisfied her self-respect by an indignant opposition, would satisfy her love by a half-reluctant, but altogether implicit, submission to his wishes.

The possibility remained. He roused himself to the hope it inspired, and went rapidly to his boat. The fresh wind from the open sea blew away his mental disquiet. The delicious saline scent of the sea-weeds gave him a singular sense of strength. It acted upon his unstrung nerves as pungent salts act upon a faint, hysterical woman. He seized the oars, and with rapid sweeps pulled for Castletown pier. The sun was just setting, and there was quite a company of officers and pretty girls walking on the narrow sea-wall or the military parade. None of

them had, at that hour, power to win more than a passing salute from him. His sister Harriet was the one woman he wished to see.

She met him at the door. "George," she said, "step softly. Mother has been ill, and is asleep. Doctor Grageen has just gone. She would not allow me to be sent for, and so he remained in the house until I returned."

"Any one might have seen that mother was ill this morning. I wonder you left her?"

"And you?"

"Women are supposed to know each other's troubles—a mother naturally looks for physical sympathy from her daughter."

"Mother has been ill ever since you came home. She never before had these attacks of fainting. You are to blame for them, in some way, I am sure."

His trenchant aspect irritated her. She moved the tea cups impatiently, and began to pour out the fragrant, stimulating draught. He drank it with eager haste, and then, without deigning to answer her accusation, asked: "What made you bring that babbling crowd after me this afternoon?"

"I did not bring them. You are my brother ;

do you think I took any pleasure in your humiliation?"

"Humiliation!"

"Certainly! Even if we had not heard Bella's last words, her attitude was eloquent enough. You have made a town's talk of yourself."

"I can't help women talking."

"To be refused! scornfully refused, by that fisher-girl! George Pennington, what did you say to her? She was in a most unladylike temper."

"Were there any remarks made in the boat as you returned?"

"Remarks! Kitty Dinwoodie behaved shamefully to me. I shall not ask her to be my bridesmaid now."

"Unfortunate Kitty."

"Of course, I made some remarks. How could I pass such a scene by? I had to remark that you had been in love with Bella Clucas ever since you were a boy."

"All right; that is perfectly correct."

"I had to explain how much mother and I disapproved of your attachment, and then Kitty flamed up like gunpowder, and said——"

"What did she say? Tell me the truth, Harriet."

"She said, 'Every officer in the barracks, and every sailor in the boats, and every young man in the town that had an ounce of sense was in love with Bella Clucas.' I reminded her of your position in life, and she answered, quite sharply, 'Bella is good enough for a better man. And as for being a fisher-girl, perhaps I didn't know that her father had married a fisher-girl—Nora Clukish, of Creg-y-neesh!' Then she fell most absurdly into dialect, and added—'a poor gel, of coorse, but havin a pedigree longer than any king in Europe for all. And the good she is, and the sweet, and the glory my father is takin in her, and the love in my heart! Aw, wonderful!'"

"Kitty Dinwoodie is a treasure, the noblest girl in the island, except Bella."

"The idea of Major Dinwoodie going into the fishing cottages for a wife! Kitty had no right to tell a thing like that about her father and mother. Such imprudences come of temper. There was a most uncomfortable feeling, I assure you; for though all the men pretended to applaud Kitty's independence, it was a most

trying situation for every girl present. And Harry Sutcliffe, who always will attempt to make things agreeable, really went too far. I felt hurt at the attention he paid to Kitty. I have made up my mind to treat her with more ceremony for the future."

"Very well. Do you feel as if it would be kind to see how mother is?"

"You need not remind me of my duty, George. I suppose you want to go out again!"

"If mother wishes to see me, she is before every one and everything; if not, I will go and take a short walk—and a cigar."

"You will go to Glen Mellish. You think Bella is miserable and will meet you there—as usual."

"Are you judging Bella by yourself?"

"*George Pennington!*"

"*Harriet Pennington!*"

The flinging of their personal cognomen at each other was usually the Parthian shot in all their disputes. It meant no serious ill-will, for family ties bear a tremendous strain before the tug weakens them. George loved his sister with a very solid, satisfactory affection; and Harriet not only returned it fully, she also felt for her brother's beauty and accomplishments a

most sincere admiration. She rated him to his face much lower than she rated him when he was not present ; she often spoke slightly to him, but she would not have permitted any other human being to speak slightly of him.

But though man may control his domestic arrangements, he cannot enter into any covenant with Nature. When George was ready to seek the trysting place in Glen Mellish he found that the weather had changed. A torrent of slant rain was falling, and the wind rolled with strange sounds down the cold inlets and went moaning across the bay. The sky was like iron, and in the darkness nothing could be seen but the flash of the "white horses" as they trod and reared far out at sea.

Besides, George was heart-confident that Bella would not be in Glen Mellish, even if the atmosphere were a blue transparency ablaze with stars. He knew her too well to hope that she had already forgiven him ; he knew that the real decision of his clearest judgment was that she never would forgive him. But as the days went monotonously on, soaked with rain and grey with driving fogs, the young man became unable to endure the suspense.

He wrote a letter to Bella, and a fisher-lad brought it back to him unopened. And in those days letters kept their secrets; they did not permit an offended person to at once gratify their curiosity and their pride. George knew that his folded message, closed with wax and stamped with his private seal, had said nothing to Bella, either secretly or authoritatively. However, after a few more miserable days—which he spent in exploring his affections, in counting his wounds, in telling himself that all was over, that his happiness was wrecked, and his love slain—he wrote once more. It was a beautiful and touching effusion. He felt sure that if Bella read it she would not be able to resist his entreaties for another interview.

But Bella did not read it. When brought to her bedside she regarded it with that apathy which exhaustion from physical suffering induces. "'Tis a letter from Captain Pennington; will I be readin it to you, *ma chree*?" Bella shut her eyes, and with her wasted hand made a faint motion to indicate her reluctance and dislike. So the letter was returned, as its predecessor had been.

It was some relief to the sombre unhappiness

of those days that Mrs. Pennington, with her gradual recovery, became possessed by one idea—that of Harriet's immediate marriage. The poor lady knew that in this last attack she had received her death-warrant. As she lay motionless and speechless on her bed, her heart and her conscience were arguing out some terrible questions :—

“Ought she to tell Colonel Sutcliffe that the girl he loved was the daughter of a felon ?

“If she did so, how would a man so sensitively honourable take the revelation ?

“Would he not say to her, ‘When I asked for your daughter's hand why was I not made acquainted with this dreadful fact ?’

“Would he desert Harriet ? If so, what shame, what scandals, what endless suppositions they must endure ! Colonel Sutcliffe would certainly say nothing, but might not they be compelled to tell the truth in order to prevent suspicions even more disgraceful.

“If he deserted Harriet, how were they to face the circumstance ? Should they go away, or bear the brunt of the social storm, and trust to time to efface the shame ?

"How would Harriet personally endure the horror of the revelation and the cruel disappointment? Would it make her ill?

"Would she herself be able to bear the anguish long enough to sustain her child through the first pangs of her calamity.

"Even if Colonel Sutcliffe behaved with a chivalric kindness and honour they had no right to expect, how would it influence her daughter's married life? Would not the noblest nature, in the long run, grow irritated by the whisper, which nothing would constantly suppress: 'My wife is the child of a felon—and my children!' Such thoughts could not be prevented they would leave in the heart the leaven of their own miserable shame; they would eventually corrode the sweetest affection, the brightest nature."

One by one these hard facts resolved themselves into problems the solution of which destroyed her last illusions and drove her into the necessity of some irrevocable decision. At first she only considered the case as it regarded Harriet, but the claims of others also demanded a hearing and would not be put aside. And the poor mother shuddered when

she tried to imagine what might be the result of this infamous secret upon her son.

She had the usual superstition that the honour of men is something more precious and more sensitive than that of women. Harriet might shut herself away from the world, George must face its cruellest scorn. And much as she loved her son she appraised very fairly his moral courage. "He will go wrong altogether—he will sink to the level to which society will pitilessly assign him ; I cannot—I cannot place him in such frightful circumstances."

With this thought always came another—"Robert Pennington, above all others, must be kept in ignorance." She knew quite well what course her brother-in-law would take. He would have no hesitation about telling the whole truth, without reservations or excuses, to Colonel Sutcliffe. He would say, "We believed this man to be dead. We believed it to be out of his power to bring shame upon his innocent children. We find that he is alive. His future conduct is uncertain, and we will not permit him the opportunity to disgrace another honourable family." She knew that on this ground he

would oppose the marriage of his niece, and she was quite aware that in the end they would be compelled to surrender their will to his—"and it would be right and just and honourable, as men look at such things," the tortured, dying woman whispered.

But there are born mothers, as there are born artists, or born poets, or born scientists. Martha Pennington, without being foolishly demonstrative, had the motherly instinct in a superlative degree. She permitted these thoughts and many others to pass through her mind, but the end of all her solitary arguments was the same:—"My children are not held by the good God responsible for their father's sin; I will not make them responsible to the world. I will not speak to Robert Pennington or Colonel Sutcliffe about my trouble; it is to the Father in Heaven I will open my heart. I will tell Him everything, He will understand me."

When she had definitely reached this conclusion she had an uncontrollable desire to consummate as quickly as possible her plans. Her precarious health was a sufficient excuse for hurrying forward the marriage; but, as it happened, no excuse was needed. Colonel

Sutcliffe's father was also in ill-health, and was anxiously urging his son to resign his commission and assume the charge of the estate ; so that a final arrangement for the ceremony on the twentieth of December gave general satisfaction. Immediately after it the young couple were to go to Sutcliffe Manor, in Yorkshire, to spend the Christmas holidays.

Everything, then, in the house tended towards this event. Harriet, delightfully hurried on every hand, found the dull days bright days and the long hours far too short for all her engagements. The house was always pleasantly full of young ladies. Harriet had a queer kind of authority over them. She was a temporary queen, entitled to their homage and their service. But Kitty Dinwoodie was not among her maids. She had not quite forgiven Harriet for tempting her into such an unconventional defence of Captain Pennington's love affair, and she fancied that Captain Pennington was a little presuming upon her favour in consequence.

Kitty's defection, however, did not much trouble Harriet, for she was at this time in a charitable mood with all the world. Two days before her marriage she went in the afternoon

through the home which she was soon to leave for ever, and her heartsoftened and glowed within her. All around were tokens of love—gems, and laces, and lustrous silks, and embroidered crapes, which had come from out the scented depths of her mother's Indian cabinet. They filled the room with Oriental airs of sandalwood and cedar, calamus and nard, and myrrh. Her uncle's splendid gifts were upon her dressing-table. Her bridal robes were lying in their white cases. There were a hundred pretty tokens of affection beneath her eyes.

Yet, as she looked at them with pride and pleasure, it suddenly struck her that one was wanting. Bella had sent her no gift and no message of congratulation. The thought was a sudden chill to her. "Perhaps I have been too proud and cross; Bella was fond of me. How often we talked of my wedding and of her share in it. I think I ought to write to her." She knew, indeed, that she had promised Bella the dignity of being one of the bridal maids. She had even pleased herself with the thought of the girl's magnificent beauty robed in diaphanous white and pink rosebuds. She did not wish to go as far as that now—she naturally disliked

the old-fashioned form of keeping her word ; to be able to forget—that is one of the privileges of the rich and happy. But she could write. It would be pleasant to see Bella once more—pleasant to part friends with her—very pleasant to show her all the beautiful garments and delightful presents she had received.

. Now it really does happen that the things which alter our lives and give us our strongest emotions appeal for decision in the most commonplace manner, and at times the very reverse of picturesque. Bella was washing the breakfast dishes when Harriet's letter was put into her hand. She knew at once from whom it had come, she divined its purport, she felt the answer to it might give the bias to her future fortune. For she suspected that it had been written at the solicitation of George, and that therefore a favourable one would be taken as the first step towards a reconciliation.

Her mother watched her anxiously, but she did not offer either a word of advice or of warning. The girl must be left to decide for herself ; at the last it would come to that. Bella sat down, and let the letter, with its dainty pale blue seal, lie unopened in her hand.

The weeks which had passed since that miserable interview in Vorg inlet had written their sad history on the girl's face and form. Most of them had been spent in the semi-delirium of fever, and she had risen from her bed of suffering shorn of the glory of her youth. Her fine hair had been cut short, her radiant colour was gone, she had wasted frightfully, and was still so weak and nervous that Harriet's letter trembled in her clasp as if it were shaken by a wind.

"Shall I read it, mother? It is from Miss Harriet."

"I would, Bella. If there's temptation in it, face it; that's the way, *ma chree!*"

It was a very kind letter—that is, the words were kind words, and the reflections were at least not harder on Bella than on others. But it carried with it an atmosphere of vaunting, egotistical happiness which Harriet could not repress, and which Bella's sad and wounded soul shrank from. None of its specious, pleasant words deceived her. People in soul-sickness often attain to a kind of prescience, which does not altogether desert them for many days, and Bella, still in this abnormal state of intelligence,

put every word in its proper place and estimated every profession at its proper value.

When she had read it, to the last letter of its neat signature, she looked up with kindling eyes and flushing face. "She's wantin me to go to the house, and promised she says, and all to that—seemin kind, but—but I'm not takin it so."

"Allis she was sayin that you were to stand at her side when she would be marriet."

"Aw, then, it is Frances Kelly and Christina Caine and the rest of the Quality now. Well, she's used of the like, and the Quality stand by the Quality whether or not—you'll give in to that, and me only a common pessin."

"You're every taste as good as she is, I tell ye ; and you should be havin more sense than to be pullin down yourself, for it's pullin down all with you and afore you—middlin bad, Bella, is that !"

"We know nothin about them afore us."

"Aw, then, if I didn' know nothin about nothin, I'd leave it so ; bless me, it isn' reasonable not to do that, eh ?"

"I'm not goin to the house, not I ! It's to look at her fine clothes and her fine presents

she's callin me. Aw, you better believe it is. The cup she's drinkin isn' sweet enough till she's seein my tears in it—and her joy not puffic wantin the sight of my misery. I'm understandin it all, mayve better than she does herself."

"A fine weddin, though, Bella; aisy to know that."

"Aw, yes—a mortal show, never fear! And the whole parish there. But Bella Clucas? *No!* 'Tis a poor letter, mother; I'm not mindin it. I know the lot; proud! aw, scandalous! and selfish, I tell ye, selfish thallure!"

A crisis is the occasion for a predominating influence to declare itself, and Mary Clucas regarded any overture from the Penningtons as a crisis in her daughter's life. If she accepted it, she knew that George would regain his influence over her—if not, she would believe that Bella's humiliation and suffering had not been in vain.

"'Tis a poor letter, mother; I'm not mindin it." How comforting were the words and the decision implied by them. For, though the mother did not think of expressing the feeling, she knew in her heart that a hard experience

either makes us better or worse, and that if Bella, in feeding on the bread of bitterness, had come to her full moral stature and found out her moral strength, comfort would certainly follow sorrow, and peace grow out of strife.

Generally, great renunciations are accomplished without words. The two women looked at each other. The mother's eyes were full of tears. Bella answered them with caresses—that beautiful language for those whose hearts are too full for words. There was now an intimate content between them ; and Bella, who had never complained much, after this did not complain at all. Thus do the eternal verities grow from out the wrongs and disappointments of time ; and women, whose feet are in the dust, breathe the airs of immortality.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES.

We make our lives as we sew—stitch by stitch.

Each man has some one object of pursuit
And lavishes his thoughts delightedly
On the dear idol.

Trouble knows no rest.
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant tide.

IF people will only recall the personalities and circumstances which make up their knowledge of the world they will be amazed at the persistency with which evident happiness is associated with some hidden tragedy. To the general observer Harriet Pennington's life appeared to be altogether in the sunshine. But one pale, sad woman saw the shadow of shame and sorrow following hard after her, and she watched it with an almost breathless tension of agonising interest.

All Mrs. Pennington's hopes and fears were

fixed upon one event. If only Harriet were married! She sat in these last days almost motionless by her window. Her eyes were keeping watch, her ears were abnormally sensitive. If *that* step were to approach she knew that she would feel it, even when it was beyond her own boundaries. And yet she scarcely thought her wretched husband would intrude upon his daughter's marriage feast—there would be nothing to gain by such an act of cruelty, and she assured herself continually that Arthur Pennington had not a naturally malignant nature.

But if he came near at all—if she were aware of his presence—if she saw him, it would be sufficient to snap asunder her thread of life, already frayed and worn to its last thin strand. Such an event, though anticipated, would delay the marriage for at least a year. Who could tell what revelations might be made in a year? The dying lady, though these thoughts gnawed at the very threshold of life, forbade herself to listen to them. She closed with her cold, trembling hands every avenue of feeling, and sat almost breathless in the presence of God, praying, constantly praying, that He would send

an angel to guard her gates, lest "one that troubleth" should pass through them.

The physician who watched over her wondered at her endurance. He gave her a larger dose of his favourite drug, and remarked complacently on its potency. He would have been offended if she had told him her thought—"The drug is powerless to help me, only by the supernatural is the soul made strong to suffer and endure."

At last the morning so eagerly watched for arrived—a bright, clear morning, with a crisp feeling in the air, and lovely patches of blue in the sky. Harriet was exquisitely dressed, and when the last flower and gem had been put in place she knelt at her mother's knee and received her kiss and blessing. The beautiful ceremony was performed under exceptionally picturesque conditions ; the women in their splendid dresses being thrown into the finest relief by the environment of the military element and the outer background of bronzed natives, with their dark-blue garments and unmistakable air and look of the sea.

Mrs. Pennington imagined it all, and when Harriet came back to her, with that new joy

on her face which is the first reflection of happy wifehood, she let her hands fall apart, a faint colour crept to her cheeks, and she sighed deeply, as those sigh who are suddenly relieved from some intolerable burden. But even yet her soul was on the alert. She did not dare to relax its watchfulness. For weeks it had been going to and fro around the lives of those she loved, guarding every avenue against evil—a combat without truce.

For this poor, weak woman believed with all her soul in the omnipotence of prayer. God had said, "Ask all, I will give all;" and she obeyed Him. She thought it impossible that He should deceive her. She believed God heard the cry of her disquieted heart amid the harmonies of the universe, and His command to "pray without ceasing"—a command which terrifies the souls at ease—gave her the only sense of safety and peace she trusted in. She could not speak to her children or friends; but to God, what could she not say? And it was not to such prayers "repetitions" were forbidden. Hers was the widow's "importunity" which elicited the "do likewise." She told all, she asked all, and she made her

request continually. What else is prayer than this?

If there had been any suspicion in the household of latent trouble, her restless, curious questions about those present in the church might have aroused it. She was scarcely to be satisfied. "Was there no one else there? Did you see any strangers? There must have been some strangers." Over and over she endeavoured to find out by such remarks if all the spectators had been well-known people. The answers from every one were satisfactory.

When the day was quite over, when Colonel Sutcliffe and his bride were on their way to Yorkshire, when the guests were all gone and only Robert Pennington sat with his nephew over the parlour fire talking of the day's event, then at last she felt that she might say, "Return unto thy rest, O, my soul!" Then she lay down, and, like a little child, waited for the healing mystery of sleep, still as the grave, kind as Heaven.

"He has gone quite away," she whispered, "and my heart was unjust to him." In reality, her heart had been a true diviner. From behind the outermost row of spectators the

father of the bride had watched her. As she passed out on the arm of her husband he felt the rose scent from her garments, and their rustle stirred his heart into a tumult. He saw the blush upon her cheek, the joy in her eyes, the smile that lingered round her pretty mouth. He could have touched her hand. His son and brother passed him equally close. But his form was hidden behind that of the sexton, his hat shielded the upper part of his face, his handkerchief the lower. He had selected his position with care, and secured it with a generous fee. And his presence was a matter of no importance to the general public; to his nearest and dearest he was a dead man. After all, it was a cruel ordeal. He had never before realised the death in life to which his crime had doomed him. He went from the church to a solitary cave on the seashore and wept bitterly—wept such tears as the lost angels may weep when they pass the gates of Paradise.

Robert Pennington had arrived two days before the marriage. Indeed, it was his splendid gifts which had so enlarged and softened Harriet's heart that she felt desirous to include Bella in her general amnesty with

the world. Almost his first words to his sister-in-law referred to the man whose memory haunted every thought she had. "Martha," he said, "I bring you good news. I have had a letter from one of the three men who outlived that terrible journey in which Arthur perished. There is no doubt he died in the bush. Forty of them did so. The Governor has pushed inquiry even beyond probability. There is nothing contrary to this discovered. Indeed, this letter from one who survived declares that Arthur fell down at his side. My dear, let us bury our sorrow for ever."

"I loved him, Robert—once."

"I loved him also. May God be merciful to him! To-day let us forgive the sorrow and shame he brought us."

To have shared her secret with this sympathetic friend would have been a comfort beyond words to Martha Pennington, but then the result could not be contemplated! So she accepted what was told her, and Robert Pennington wondered at the queer perversity of women. He had thought she would have at least uttered a fervent "Thank God!" that she might perhaps have asked some questions, or

wished to read the letter which described her husband's death. But she had taken the news of her release without any signs of gratitude ; there had been even a tone of reproach in the unlooked-for assertion, "I loved him, Robert—once." Surely, he thought, a woman under any circumstances is an unknown quantity.

This thought of woman's uncertainty and inscrutability forced itself on his consciousness again as he sat with his nephew on the night of the marriage day. The pained tension of Mrs. Pennington's face during its early hours had alarmed him. He had feared every moment that death would come to the marriage feast, and he dreaded the hour in which mother and daughter must part. But the parting was over, the daughter had gone away for ever from her home, and the mother was almost cheerful. Surely women were past finding out.

He made this decision and looked up at his nephew. The young man sat opposite him thoughtfully smoking. Robert Pennington regarded his handsome face with pleasure and felt grateful for his silence. Some young men would have tried to entertain him, would have bored him with questions and compelled him

to talk when he wished to think. George had bided his time, and it is such trifles as these that lead the heart into the most decided preferences. He leaned forward and touched his nephew's hand, while his face brightened and softened in every line.

"George, we have been forgetting you. Harriet has usurped every thought lately ; now let us talk. What about the Indian question ?"

It was the subject occupying George's mind at the moment. He had been wondering how to bring on its discussion, for his feelings and desires had changed since Bella's rejection of his unworthy offer. If Bella had been willing to go with him it would have been the pleasantest and wisest solution of a doubtful relationship. Situations not permissible in English society might obtain a kind oblivion there. Besides, the strangeness and distance would have been a protection against the interference of Bella's passionate kinsmen. But now there was no necessity to fear their anger, why should he go into danger and privation when the situation offered him no equivalent ?

This train of thought in all its bearings was

familiar to him. His uncle's question was expected, and he was prepared to answer it.

"I am very uncertain about the Indian question, sir; and when one is uncertain, I have always heard, it is best to stand still."

"Your mother is very sick."

"Very."

"Her days are evidently numbered. Do you think she ought to be left alone?"

"It would be cruel to leave her alone."

"Then stay with her, George—make her last hours happy ones. When she passes beyond human love you must come to me. At the longest it will be but a few weeks—you will spare so much of your life to brighten hers?"

"Of course I will."

"Then there is no more to be said at present."

This decision precisely suited George. He could not bear to quite relinquish every hope of recovering himself with Bella, and he believed that, when her health was restored and the spring weather tempted her to resume her usual out-of-door habits, he would find some opportunity to plead his cause and obtain her forgiveness.

Apart from this hope, other things made him quite willing to accept a few weeks' absolute

retirement. He was not without resources for such a life. He could make "intimates" of books. He loved the sea. He enjoyed in a selfish way that satisfaction which comes from being kind to others. As a matter of personal comfort he liked to be on good terms with himself. Then his relations with Kitty Dinwoodie and the garrison were just a little strained and chilled. He could not bear to resign the popular favour he had enjoyed, and he hoped that his filial devotion would put out of memory that whisper, that supposition of something dishonourable, which had made his name less pleasant and frequent on the lips of many who had been used to speak it with admiration.

After Robert Pennington's departure the house soon fell into a certain quiet order, which George approved. For in a few days he hit upon a means of employment which comforted him amply for all his disappointments, which made the longest hours short, and rendered him indifferent to the opinion of the outside world—he *began to write a book of poems*. In searching for rhymes he found a happiness only known to poets. Unfinished stanzas went out to walk with him ; rhythmic effects answered the sweep

of his oars. Bella was no longer a subject for mortifying and painful reflection—she furnished him with material. He embalmed her beauty in sonnets, and her faithlessness and scornful coldness lost their sting as soon as he began searching his brains and his dictionary for rhymes to them.

These literary efforts—really very fair ones—appeared to Mrs. Pennington to possess wonderful merit. Many of them brought tears to her eyes, and the poor lady went gently down to the grave soothed by the musical syllables representing to her a side of her son's nature which might have the power to elevate the whole. She encouraged him with heartfelt sympathy and admiration, and he rewarded her with an affectionate companionship of which neither wearied. For George read his own writings to her with feeling and enthusiasm, and Mrs. Pennington listened with an attention that never flagged and a pride which expressed itself in unstinted predictions of future greatness.

Partly as a relaxation, partly as a stimulant to thought, George walked much on the seashore ; or, if the weather was propitious, paddled about the grey inlets, or even ventured a short distance beyond the line of smooth water.

Early in January there were a few days of exceptional warmth and beauty, and on one of them he walked down Glen Mellish to his old trysting-place with Bella. A kind of sentimental sorrow, not by any means painful, prompted him to renew impressions already wearing dim. He was speculating on the number of lines necessary to fill a certain page as he approached the big boulder on which he had been used to sit with Bella. It was already appropriated. A man was waiting there, and he had a most uncomfortable twinge of jealousy for a moment.

He approached with a manner even a little defiant, but when the stranger turned his face he was inclined to smile at his ready suspicions. It was the man whom he had once warned at midnight—the man with those strange, haunting eyes which he had never quite forgotten. His cigar was just finished, and he rose up and flung the remnant away as George saluted him with that courtly upward movement of the hand which his military training had taught him.

The father looked at his son with eyes of fathomless feeling. Their long, sad gaze troubled George beyond his understanding, and when his greeting was answered with one

of equal grace and courtesy the young man instantly obeyed the mysterious attraction which this stranger had over him.

"Take a fresh cigar, sir?" he said pleasantly, and he offered him his case.

Then they began to walk slowly up and down the bit of brown level turf, and before George was well aware he was talking very freely to his strange companion of his own life and its surroundings. And at the moment he did not think it peculiar that he should be so familiar with them as to fall sympathetically into his experiences without requiring either explanations or facts.

At first they spoke of Bella; George began to describe her beauty. The older man knew her well. "He often smoked a pipe with Ruthie." He could tell George all about Bella's illness. He had even sat with the family through the long sad nights when her life had been in the balance. He had spoken with Bella not two hours gone; he had come far closer to the Clucas family than ever George had been permitted to do!

"Tell me how Bella looks, sir," said George—he still spoke with a little of the pride of proprietorship in his tone. It was as if he had said, "Tell me how *my* Bella looks."

"She is not so handsome as she was—but she is a good girl. You have had Love's young dream and awakened from it ; take an old man's advice, sir—don't renew the experience."

"I shall never find another girl so beautiful and so affectionate."

"She is not your mate. I am no simpleton. I know something of women. Will you tell me why you quarrelled with Bella?"

George had no objections to talk. Some men lack all reticence about their amours. They are not ashamed of the snubs they receive, they are even proud of their infidelities. His father listened patiently and observingly ; George was showing him his whole heart. He led him into little bye-ways of conversation ; he induced such a feeling of confidence in his sympathy that the young man did not hesitate to declare that hitherto he had mismanaged his life and been something like a fool.

"You have been in love. Some men are naturally fools, they are double fools in love."

"Still I must say that, among all the women I have met, Bella was the sweetest and best."

"The best is only best in its season ; the season for Bella is past."

"You think, then, there is no hope of a reconciliation?"

"Why should you want one? If I had insulted a woman——"

"Insulted! Sir!"

"Let us be frank, and we shall be friends. I fell in love with you that night you struck a match to tell me the time, and then took a kindly thought about my life. It is so many, many years since any one cared whether I lived or died—since any one wanted me to live—that your warning made my heart tremble. An angel speaking could not have affected me more. I have remained here solely for the pleasure of seeing you. Can't you bear the truth from me? You will never have a better friend."

George turned his face to the speaker with a blush of pleasure dyeing it rosy. He was very sensitive to the flattery of women, but to have a man, grey and seamed with the storms of life, say such loving words to him, touched the young fellow almost to tears.

"Thank you. I think it would be better to throw away good money than such kindness as you offer. You look as if you had seen the world and known men and women. Say what you like to me."

"I will tell you the truth always. I will share your troubles and fence them with my own. No; we need not shake hands—it is mostly an empty form."

"Have you been here ever since that night?"

"Yes. There is a little cottage near Scarlett—the Widow Sulby's—I live there."

"You must be very lonely."

"I am not without education. It is the brainless who seek companionship and amusement at any cost. If a man can think, and dares to think, he can animate the dreariest solitude. I have heard that you write poetry. The glen, and the gaery, and the sea must all have spoken to you. I should like to hear what they have said. We may gossip about Nature, and do no harm."

No proposal could so easily and so completely have won George's heart. He recited some of the most ambitious of his sonnets, and the elder man was much impressed with their excellence. For, at that day, general education had not developed the faculty of musical syllables, and the man who could write both rhyme and reason was held as a superior kind of mortal.

"You are a second Byron! Give your poems to the world, and it will say so."

"I doubt it."

"I would not use the word—it is unlucky. Doubt is misfortune—it dogs the man who dares not meet his fate. I have seen this: that they who are for ever doubting fall to the very wretchedness they fear."

"You seem at once so wise and so unhappy. I cannot understand——"

"When I was young, sir, I sowed what are called wild oats. The devil harvests that crop, and the devil's corn all goes to bran."

George became very thoughtful, and the conversation ceased. But the companionship of men accepts silence as well as speech. They do not feel that they must chatter to avoid offence. They recognise the advantage of supplementing confidence with thought. On the gaery they stood still a moment and looked around over the brown desolate earth and the grey-blue sea, where, toward the centre of the watery circle, a fishing-boat was lungeing heavily as the deliberate rollers came shoreward.

"We shall have a chill easterly waft after this warm breeze," said the elder man. "The wind will come in a moment, and the sea will spring up like magic into a short, nasty 'lipper.'

Good morning, sir. You have given me a happy hour."

He walked away with the words, and George stood a moment to look after him. He had spoken of a "happy hour," but his voice left behind an echo of untranslatable sadness. "What is it? What is it?" he asked, and then he went into his mother's presence and began to tell her of the new friend he had found—the strange man who loved him because he had been human enough to point out a danger in his path. And he did not notice the terror and amazement in her eyes, nor the anxious tones in which she asked question after question about the man's appearance.

"Handsome? No, he is not; and he looks as if the world had kicked him from pole to pole. But one feels that he is a gentleman—that he is well born and well educated. I cannot make you understand; his actions and his words suggest perpetual incongruities."

"Yet you call him a gentleman?"

"He has the air of one—that ease of manner which is as free from familiarity as from awkwardness. It is not a thing acquired; a man has it, or he has it not; and yet, as I have said, there

are perpetual incongruities. I cannot explain. He was most enthusiastic about my poems; there is no doubt that he is highly cultured."

"I must try and see him some day—when I am able. In the meantime I would not trust him too far. He may be—you cannot tell what he may be. I will rest a little now."

Left by herself she sat perfectly motionless. Well-disciplined women take the blows of circumstance without outcry. Corroding anxiety, hidden terror, fatal discoveries made in the natures of those she loved—she could but silently endure them.

"I am so helpless," she whispered. Then, looking out to sea, her long gaze caught a boat coming swiftly towards the land. She watched the man steering and the man rowing, and a smile spread over her face. "We do but row, we are *steered* by a Hand mighty as it is mysterious." She seemed to see, through the gloom and dull storm surrounding her, this Hand advancing out of the darkness. Tossing upon the open sea of sorrow, she felt serene in the conviction that it was able to direct and to preserve. She began to perceive the shores of that Land of Light everywhere called "Blessed."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE AND DEATH.

After the burden and heat of the day
The starry calm of night ;
After the rough and toilsome way
A sleep in the robe of white.
Are they dreaming, the Sleepers pale and still ?
For their faces are rapt and calm
As though they were treading the Holy Hill
And hearing the Angels' psalm.
The things that were hid from waking eyes
Shine clear to the veiled sight ;
In the last deep sleep the Pilgrims rise
To walk on the shores of Light.

HAPPINESS, like Truth, has a variety of aspects. Many young men would have found the quiet, monotonous existence which satisfied George Pennington for the next six weeks intolerable. But its compensations were sufficient for him. He was delighted with himself. He looked upon his nearly-finished volume with admiration. Matt Kellish—by which name

only he knew his father—stimulated him both by admiration and dissent. “The poems are wonderful,” he would say; “but after all, Captain of what use are they?”

“A work of genius exists for its own sake, Mr. Kellish. It is not intended for use. Compare that beech with the plum-tree beside it. The beauty of the beech is its warrant; the crippled, stunted plum-tree would have no place in the garden but for its purple drupes.”

Nor was the production of a work of genius George's only warrant for the satisfaction which made his life very tolerable during this time. He was regaining the popularity he had lost. Whatever his wrong to Bella Clucas had been, it was a past wrong. Bella had recovered her health and beauty and did not seem unhappy, and the young man's devotion to his sick mother was a daily and evident act of self-denying love—an act that appealed to the women of every household.

And it is the women after all that regulate the social standing of men. Those who rode out to ask after the dying lady were captivated by her son's tender regard for her. The mothers praised and encouraged him, the daughters gave

him approving glances from kind and beautiful eyes. And there really are women who enjoy speaking well of others. George could feel the good report of himself in the grip of the men's hands, and hear it in the tones of their voices.

He began to think better of himself than he had done since Bella's scornful and indignant estimate of him. "If girls of Kitty Dinwoodie's rank could overlook his fault, surely Bella had also forgiven. Of course it had been a personal wound in Bella's case, and only a general affront to her sex in every other case. *But Bella loved him!* That would balance all differences."

As the spring opened he began to haunt Glen Mellish and the seashore nearest to the Clucas cottage. But he never saw the girl. "She is avoiding me, therefore she still feels my influence." This conviction gave him persistence, and one afternoon he resolved to make a decided effort to speak to her.

It was an unusual hour for him to be abroad, and if Bella still thought of possibilities regarding him she would remember this. He was full of hope, though it was a day of cold, neutral dimness. The trees had a voice of complaint, and the curlews whistled overhead like messen-

gers of evil. Even to the horizon the sea was grey, and the few ships on it looked forlorn and cowering. But George went swiftly down the glen, and was so light-hearted that a Highland Scot would certainly have predicted disappointment for him.

As he made the last turn his heart beat wildly. Bella was standing in the doorway. Mary sat upon the step at the threshold. He drew back, and from the shadow of the rock watched the girl who had been his dream by day and night, the inspirer of his poems, and the troubler of his conscience. She had recovered all her beauty, and with it *the something more* that a sharp experience nobly borne confers. An air of melancholy softened the vividness of her colour. It was like the tender haze of autumn over the perfected year. She had grown taller and more slender. Her bright hair lay loosely around her brow and nestled in short rings and curls behind her ears and at the back of her neck. Some fishing-nets lay at her feet. She had, perhaps, been mending them before she stood up.

As soon as George made a movement towards her she saw it. He came forward eagerly, with

a smile parting his lips and brightening his face, but he was aware in a moment that there was no pleasant response. Bella was watching him with the passionless calm of a soul that was superior to his influence. There was neither love nor hate in her silent, gracious figure; neither love nor hate in her cold, innocent face.

As soon as she understood that he really meant to address her she turned slowly into the cottage; and Mary rose and stood in the door. It was not easy to meet the offended mother. An inexpressible reproach was in her dark eyes; she was on guard, on the defensive, ready to accuse or to challenge.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Clucas; can I come in and talk half-an-hour with you? I have a great deal to explain."

"The barefaced you are, Captain! and 'good afternoon,' indeed! A middlin bad afternoon with the like of you comin into it. And as for 'splainin'—useless, useless, and not needed, thank God! All clear villainy enough, and no mistake."

"One would think I had committed some great crime in telling Bella that."

"Great crime! Bless me, no! The spirit

for a great crime is not in you! Chut! A sneakin sin against a poor girl—the like of that for you! A sneakin sin, Captain, and no use in it. The fool you were—it's the abslit truth—the fool you were!"

"Well, Mary, I know it now."

"'Mary!'—not from your lips. Mrs. Clucas is too much. The good name itself seems false from them."

"Can I see Bella a few moments?"

"Aw, then, you can not."

"Mrs. Clucas, I am very sorry. I have suffered a great deal."

"I'm not regardin what you say. Sufferin! Not you, nor like to."

"For the sake of old times."

"Clean forgot are them. Lizzen! Come here no more, lettin on to be sufferin. My daughter—God bless her—is over the likin for you, and there's others that are dislikin you desperate, and not tryin to get over that. They'll be havin it out with you some day or night, by the Lord they will! 'Splainin indeed! 'Splain to them, and you'll find out the meanin of the word azackly."

She spoke promptly and positively, but with-

out passion, and the set austerity of her face made him understand, even more than her words, the uselessness of further parley. He lifted his hat and went towards the sea. Mary waited at her post long enough to satisfy her own idea of a calm and deliberate victory, then she re-entered the cottage and shut the door.

Bella stood at the table, one folded hand pressed tightly on it for support. Her eyes were dropped to hide the tears that dimmed them.

"Bella! Dear me! Is it frettin you are? And for the like of him? Very tryin of you, amazin. I wouldn' do it."

"Aw, then, mother, take patience a minute. I've been to a buryin; youth and love—a bit of my soul and life—gone for ever. Tears may drop into an open grave, surely. It isn' you that would be hard where God is easy; pityin the broken heart, and like Him for all."

"Not me, nor in me to be hard—*ma chree!* Go to yourself a bit. You're droopin-like, and no wonder. Give way to sorrow, and it will maybe give way to comfort." And then, as Bella passed within the shelter of the closed door: "Poor thing! A bird will cry with a broken wing, and why not a poor girl with a

wounded heart? And yet, no good to fret—no good at all.”

Muttering the words, Mary went to the door and set it open again and looked towards the sea.

“I wonder if he took the boat! He’ll have his hands full if he did, or I’m not knowin anythin. Ruthie and Gale are comin home the land way; very comfible that, for I’m not likin the look of the sea and sky—and the gulls are cryin that sharp and peevish, my skin creeps lizzenin them. I wonder if he took the boat—he’ll be lost if he has; ill-doers find ill ends—and deservin. Aw, bless me! what am I sayin? ’Tis a pity of him any way. And as for the bad thought in my heart, unawares, but *there* for all, Maker of Sea and Land, forgive it!”

If her eyes had been clearer she might have seen George pulling as a man pulls against a storm of passionate chagrin and wounded self-appreciation. When he left the cottage he went to the beach. A boat was there which he often used—a common row-boat, painted lead colour. It was the universal tint except ~~where~~ where the glistening brown weeds draped the black rocks. The heights above were coifed in grey fog. A

low, grey sky threw down leaden shadows. On the sea not a gleam—it was like a huge, black abyss ; even the very foam looked dull.

So the whole surroundings were in sympathy with the young man's mood. Without care or thought of the weather, he put off into the grey trouble of the ocean. And for some time the act of forcing his way through the dark mass surrounding him had a tranquillising effect upon his wounded feelings. Failure in one direction was antidoted by a sense of power in another. Though the heaving of the sea was constantly growing more portentous, he did not seriously consider its condition with regard to himself until he had passed the Stack, and was facing the dangerous coast beyond Poolvash.

Then he rested on his oars and looked around him. The tide had turned, and was pouring shoreward in a sombre stream. George knew well the sympathy between the sea and the atmosphere, and he was not astonished that the wind should rise with the tide. Wind ! In ten minutes it was coming in immense sweeps, lifting the water as it came. He took off his coat and hat, and bent himself to the oars with all his might. But he was already wearied, and

he had none of the tough staying power of the practised fishermen.

He felt terrified at the billows, which tossed his boat like a shuttlecock from wave to wave. He was using his uttermost strength, but making no headway. To keep out of the current setting with irresistible impetus to the black jagged rocks round Scarlett Point was his only expectation. And this effort must be kept up through storm and darkness until the ebb of the tide—*if it were possible*. But his heart sank, and without any conscious intention his lips began to utter those short, pitiful cries for supernatural help which are the prayers of human extremity.

So far the storm had been gathering its forces in that singular silence which is even more alarming than the wildest bluster. The gloomy stillness was full of appalling mystery. George looked anxiously round, and as he did so he perceived a large boat in which there were two men. He knew them at once—they were Ruthie and Gale Clucas ; but, humiliating as it was to call upon them, he did not hesitate to do so. His shrill cry for “help” broke Ruthie’s remark in two—

"God bless me ! that the Captain."

"It is."

"Callin us, and wantin help."

"Let him call."

"The wind risin and the tide—he'll be at the bottom in half-an-hour."

"*Bella !* He would have sent her deeper than the sea bottom—if he could."

"*Help ! help !*"

"A man axin help at sea—we are seamen, Gale."

"Let him sink or swim, as God wills."

"Mayve, then, God sent us to help him. Just your own stubbornness, Gale, we came this way at all."

"He's the worst enemy we ever had—the devil or the sea take him. I'm not regardin."

"Keep quiet. I'm not likin the hound any better than yourself—not I ; but we've orders about our enemy—lovin him, eh ? I can' do that—God Almighty, bein a father, wouldn' expec' me—but savin him is different. He'll be lookin for that much from you and me, Gale."

"Who ?"

"God Almighty, that's *who*—savin life—yandher life, that's what He'll be lookin for."

Come, my lad, work the oars ; we both know what we must do."

During this conversation George, fearing they did not hear his despairing cry, fastened his white handkerchief to the end of one of his oars and began to wave it to and fro. The white glimmer through the grey caught Ruthie's and Gale's eyes at the same moment. It was a sign of distress that appealed to their instincts and traditions as no words could do. Ruthie set his lips tight and nodded authoritatively at Gale, and Gale answered by a passionate bending to the oars, which signified at once his reluctance and his acquiescence.

Before they reached the helpless man a great wave tossed the boat so violently that George, in trying to balance himself, let the oar with its white entreaty fall into the sea. In a moment it was beyond his reach, and he was then practically at the mercy of the storm.

Ruthie and Gale looked at each other. They had wished him dead many a time. Now they had only to pursue their own road and they would have their wish. No one, with such a sky above and such a sea below, could blame them for considering their own lives first. They

could avenge all Bella's wrongs by simply *not doing good*; there would be no necessity for them to commit an evil act. The thought was instantaneously in both hearts, and George's shrill cry of "Help!" smote on their ears at the same moment.

There was a pause, an almost imperceptible delay, and Gale said sullenly, "It will be middlin hard to save ourselves. Look to the eastward—not our fault."

"No excuse—pull hard—a cruel heart is as bad as a bloody hand. Aw, bless me, we must all live, or all drown! I stand to that."

In a few minutes they had flung a rope to George, and a little skilful management soon brought the boats into a contact so close that it was practicable for the young man to leap into the larger one. He was by this time not only drenched, but also faint from fear and exhaustion, and he sank down in a condition which made Ruthie push the water-bottle towards him with the point of his foot. There happened to be some extra oil-skins in the boat, and in the same manner he was told that he might use them.

No one spoke a word. No one waited a moment to watch the deserted boat tossed from

wave to wave, nearer and nearer to the frightful rocks which rose out of the white foam, jagged and black and full of certain death. Like a giant Gale pulled with might and main for the little bay at Glen Mellish. Ruthie was steering; George—weary, abashed, and half-resentful—sat in the bottom of the boat. He would have taken the extra oars, but Gale, by a gesture fierce and imperative, had signified his refusal to accept assistance. It was no time for speech or disputing, their lives were depending upon their reaching home before the gathering storm broke in its fury.

As it was, when they came to the landing there was a wild buffeting through a smother of foam. The spray cut their faces, the lashing feathers on the tops of the waves half blinded them. They had to leave the boat unfastened and wade some distance in the surf, for the wind was coming on tremendously, and the hurly-burly of that narrow sea made itself felt in every tiny inlet. George fell twice, and but for Ruthie's hand silently extended would have perished even when his feet had touched the beach.

At the edge of the water the three men stood

to draw breath, and George said : " You have saved my life. I am grateful to you."

Gale was as one that heard not ; he had already turned his feet homeward. Ruthie stayed his footsteps a moment to answer : " Only God Almighty's grace. But for His Name you'd have been outside His mercy."

So they left him alone in the gathering gloom and he felt their desertion far more keenly than he would have felt hard words or even blows. Gale, in the act of saving his life, had refused to speak to him or to lift the oars with him. Ruthie had only broken the cold, unrelenting silence to assure him that they " had saved him for the love of God and not from any regard for himself."

As, with painful steps, he took his way up Glen Mellish, he felt this utter want of human kindness, and was angry and mortified by it. As he approached the cottage the fire and candle light shone through the windows, and he could see Ruthie and Gale sitting upon the hearth, and the women ministering to their wants. But the door was closed. If they thought of him it was only to shut him out.

He made what haste he could, but his boots and clothing were wet and heavy ; he was cold,

stiff, and weary ; and he was woefully depressed —for the utter contempt of the fishers for the life they had deigned to save was like a physical blow to a man so greedy of appreciation and so fond of being admired. Before he got to the head of the Glen the rain came down in torrents ; it fell on the rocks around with a keen, lashing sound that blended awfully with the strange noises of the wind through the funnel-like Glen and the solemn roar of the distant ocean.

It was nearly dark, only a wan shadow of light remained in the western sky. He had never been disciplined by physical suffering and discomfort, it cowed him as a flogging coves a child. When he reached the boulder which had been his trysting place with Bella he was forced to rest. In a vague way he remembered sitting there on fine moonlight nights with his arm around the girl. The memory roused in him nothing but anger. It stung him worse than the lashing rain, and he made an effort to rise and go forward. His strength was gone. A feeling of despair and exhaustion made his ears ring inward and his senses begin to fail.

At this moment he perceived a light approaching in a rapid and wavering manner. It was

the light of a lantern, and must therefore be in the hand of some human being. He called with the frantic voice of one on the verge of death and despair, and the cry was instantly answered by a cheerful "Hello!" In a few moments he felt strong arms around him, and knew that Matt Kellish was giving him brandy and half crying as he soothed and encouraged him with words of sympathy and hope.

"I saw you go away this afternoon, rowing into the storm like a madman, and I did not see you come back. I thought, perhaps you had landed somewhere and walked home. But John Quayle's anxious face at the door told me you were still absent, and I got brandy and a light, and was just going to call Ruthie and Gale and any other men I could find and search for you. I am glad no one but myself has any part of the pleasure of finding and helping you."

The kind words, the stimulating spirit, the sense of protection and help, restored George to himself. He was soon able to proceed, and in twenty minutes he stood at his own door. He was much excited, talked loudly, and laughed almost hysterically. Kellish, on the contrary,

was silent, almost stern, but his face lighted up strangely when the exuberant youth flung his arms around his neck and vowed, as he owed his life to him, that "he would love him as long as it lasted."

He resigned him to Quayle with a sigh. "I found him fainting," he said, "quite overcome, and I have given him brandy. It has taken possession of him, you see ;" then, as he turned away: "I have a good mind to go and see Clucas, and tell him what I think of shutting a man out in such a storm. It was Christ Himself standing knocking at his door this night, if he had had ears to hear Him."

But Kellish judged a little too hardly. Ruthie believed George to be quite capable of walking to his own home, and even thought the exercise would be of service to him. Gauging the young man's endurance by his own, he considered the danger to life past when he had set him upon dry land. Even Bella, who heard the story of his rescue in silence, had no suspicion of any unkindness in leaving the saved man to find his way up Glen Mellish alone. Yet, when the storm broke so early, Ruthie was moved enough to notice the subject, and to wonder if the

Captain was able for it—"bein tired and waeke with fear, and the like."

"Tired!" echoed Gale, "what with then? He sat in the boat-bottom all the way home."

"Easy! Easy, Gale! Be fair even to the like of him—he offered to take oars."

"Aw, then, do you think I would keep stroke with him? I'd rather break him across my knees than row with him—that's a fact. Aw, the coward! the puny coward, white as milk he was, and tremblin like a baby!"

"Not used with the sea, as you are, Gale. You was in a storm afore five years old. The sea was your second mother, washed you, rocked you, played with you, fed you, taught you, made a fine, strong man of you for any weather—that's you, Gale."

And Gale looked up at his mother with his bright blue eyes full of pleasure. He was one of those lovable young men who grow sweeter under their mother's smile, who are proud of their mother's approval, and would think shame of themselves if they wronged her trust or wounded her love.

This incident made a decided break in the

life of George Pennington. Though he quite recovered the physical effects of the storm in a few days, in other respects it cut him away from his previous interests. The stimulus to mental effort was gone. He could no longer idealise "his beautiful fisher-maiden." His anger at Ruthie and Gale extended to Bella. He remembered Mary's plain words with extreme offence. In fact, he was disillusioned. A sudden disgust of all his surroundings made his days intolerably long, for he had rather dropped his former companions during his poetic enthusiasm ; he fancied that such associations took him into a lower mental atmosphere than was favourable to his work.

Mrs. Pennington perceived the change at once. Nothing in nature is so sensitive to atmospheric change as love is to the mood of the loved one. She reproached herself for being so long in dying. "When the oil is exhausted, why does not the lamp go out?" But the circumstances caused her to make an effort she had long wished to make. She sent George to Douglas with some jewellery which she intended to give to Harriet, and she particularly requested him to wait there until the articles had been

thoroughly repaired and renovated. "It may take you three or four days, George ; but the change will do you good, and the Ratcliffes will be glad to see you."

The young man was ready enough for the change. He bid his mother "Good-bye" in a mood of pleasant excitement. He did not see the sign traced by a Hand that writes but once—the sign that says—"Thy hours are numbered." He went away laughing, full of his commissions and his anticipations.

An hour after his departure Mrs. Pennington called a lad that was in the household, and sent him into Castletown for medicine. "And drop these letters in the post-office, Stephen." She saw him put them in his pocket and leave the house without remark, and she trusted that the indifference of childhood would prevent him examining them ; and it is a fact that those who trust to what we blindly call "accident" are seldom disappointed. It is our well-laid plans that "gang agley." Stephen posted the letters and never noticed, or thought of noticing, their directions, though one was for the hand of Mr. Matt Kellish.

That afternoon he received it. For some

moments he was like one stupefied, he was afraid to open it, and did not do so until he reached the privacy of his room. The contents gave a wrench to his heart that was a physical pain. He knew when he read them that Death had come as a peacemaker.

"Life is nearly over, and I have something to say to you. To-morrow morning call for George. They will tell you he is in Douglas. Then say that you must see me. Come as soon after ten as possible. I grow weaker as the day goes by.—M. P."

One smiles at the efforts of a lover to look well in the eyes of his beloved; but there is an inexpressible pathos in such efforts when it is a husband whom time and evil fortune and too late repentance have made physically undesirable. Many a year had passed since Arthur Pennington dressed so carefully, or looked so anxiously in his glass for advice as to the best results. Insensibly he had been improved by his contact with George and his observation of the men in the little garrison town, but he was still one on whom sin and sorrow had left indelible and dreadful marks.

He was at the house precisely at ten, and saw

John Quayle standing at the door, luxuriously inhaling the scent of the sea and the earthy smell of the freshly-turned garden. They were accustomed to speak to each other, and when Quayle said, "It's the spring again, thank God, Mr. Kellish!" the words, few as they were, had a tone of liking in them.

"You are looking like the spring, Mr. Quayle, with the violets in your button-hole and the fresh colour in your cheeks, and your eyes like a bit of the sky. Where is the Captain? I want to see him most particularly."

"Aw, then, the Lord only knows! I wouldn't be so bold as to say, for he went to Doolish yesterday mornin'."

"Then, Mr. Quayle, you must do your best with the lady, for see her I must. If you'll say it is 'extraordinary business,' and requiring to be looked after at once, of course she'll take your advice. And to be plain with you, Mr. Quayle, it is important—very important!" And as the words fell with a persuasive ring into the ear, and a golden ring into the hand of Mr. Quayle, there was no difficulty.

In five minutes Arthur Pennington stood within the door of his dying wife's room. On

entering she motioned him to turn the key, and as he completed the act her eyes met his with a look in them which carried him back, back, back to the days of his sinless boyhood and his happy love. He trembled under it, and his suffering face seemed to ask her not to trouble these depths of memory.

“Arthur! my dear Arthur!”

“Oh, my love! Have you forgiven me—at last?” He stood still, half-way between the door and her chair, and stretched out his arms with an irresistible entreaty. She feebly raised her own; her smile answered him—he was at her knees. He was clasping her hands; her face was laid against his, their tears mingled on her white cheek.

With broken words and broken kisses they made their peace, they renewed their vows—for eternity now—they buried for ever every memory of their wrong and suffering. The mystery of that solemn communion is not translatable, if it were it could only be put into words by a kind of sacrilege. For many reasons, however, the interview could not last long. She made him sit by her side, she laid her head upon his shoulder, she whispered the

words in his ear and on his lips, that she was spending her last breath to say, "Take care of George."

"I love him. I love him better than life. If it were necessary I would give my life for him."

"Listen! He is weak *where you were weak*. He was tempted once—and the temptation was too great for him."

"Poor fellow! I will love him all the more."

"I leave him to you—a sacred charge."

"As sacred as the holy bread."

"Harriet?"

"Trouble not about her. I have been to Sutcliffe—soon after the marriage. She has all she desires; she is happy."

"Arthur! dear, dear Arthur! You have promised. We shall meet again—beyond——"

"Oh, my love! If you should not know me!"

"But I shall. Heaven is not full of impalpable shadows. Will God give us some unknown being in the place of *the one* whose image we have faithfully kept through many sorrowful years? It is impossible. He will not disappoint us. We shall meet again."

They clasped hands with the promise. For a moment Arthur Pennington's face regained beauty, for his soul reigned supreme—it was overflowing with love, with the sweetness of pardon, with immortal hope, and it transfigured the blemished and unlovely mask. Death and love have revelations such as these.

A moment more and the parting was over. He had kissed her cheek, and blessed her softly in the name of God, and prayed that she might go in peace. Then he went so quietly that no one knew when he left the house. Down to the sea-side he took his sorrow, and the wind carried his moaning away on its wings. For he hardly knew what he said, only that in his agony he kept helplessly repeating God's great name.

Hour after hour the dying woman lay quiet. Her last duty was done. Her servants came in and out, but she had no service to ask from them. The afternoon wore calmly away, and the sun sank with a majestic melancholy below the waves. As she watched it Death came to her—came like a gentle night falling over the stress of daytime, reverend and lovable. With winged feet at last he came, touching

her very tenderly. The servants, entering one by one, saw the ineffable serenity and the dignity which the last moment had left—the seal of Peace, after Sorrow vanquished, after Labour ended.

It was her desire that the body should be taken to the little Border village from which she came. She wished to lie with the fathers and mothers of her own lineage, on the windy hill-side where she had grown to girlhood, and where her only brother still lived in wealthy simplicity among his flocks and shepherds. Her wish was carefully complied with. She lay for one night in her girlhood's chamber, the next day they buried her in a small church-yard where nearly all the stones bore the name of "Brougham."

It was a chill, rainy day, and every one shivered in the lonely place, though there was the promise of spring in the budding trees and in the blackbirds whistling finely among them. The promise of spring in Nature, and the promise of eternal life in the blessed words at the grave-mouth. But none were able to accept them. They went drearily back to Brougham Hall and gathered together as their hearts led

them. George talked over the new life before him with his uncle, Robert Pennington. Harriet and her husband arranged their journey home. Mr. Brougham smoked his pipe until the evening brought his guests together.

Then the blazing fires and the twinkling chandeliers filled the big room with warmth and light. Meat and wine, and face answering face, brought comfort. With the unforgotten dead in their hearts, they began to plan for the living and talk of the future. The solemnity of a life concluded cannot interfere with the lives going on. Our ordinary existence, our repasts at stated hours, the decorous garments necessary, the proprieties to be observed—Ah, me! Grief is a flower more delicate and more prompt to fade than happiness!

Even that night there were in Brougham Hall smiles and hopes and plans for the future. God rescues our personality from the tomb, but we leave our affections there. The dead was still loved, but she had no longer any part in their joys and anxieties. George was dreaming of his future, Harriet of her home, Squire Brougham of the morrow's market. But out in the dark churchyard a man knelt

hour after hour by the newly-made grave. No one knew of his presence, no one heard the sobs which blended with the mournful wind. He was alone with those phantoms which descend upon the soul of the mourner. "*My love ! My love ! My wife ! My wife !*" so he called her, until, after long hours of misery, suddenly he found, he knew not what, penetrating sweetness. It sheltered itself in the recesses of his heart ; it filled him with rest from head to feet. It was just at dawning, and he rose up and went away comforted, whispering her name as he went.

CHAPTER XIV.

YOUTH AT THE PROW.

And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

Time the shuttle drives, but you
Give to every thread its hue
And elect your destiny.

It is the heart, and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain.

A MONTH after the death of Mrs. Pennington the pretty island home was closed. The rooms through which the dying lady had wandered with prayers on her lips, the one which had been to her the Gate of Heaven, were dismantled and left desolate. Only Mr. Kellish in the dim walked slowly about the shady garden, or sat under the trees and thought of her who was treading the hills of God.

George hurried through the business as quickly as possible. Now that his mother and sister

were gone from the home-nest he felt little reluctance in tearing it to pieces. Considering his position and personal circumstances he had made few friends, and the near presence of the Clucas family was a constant irritation. But for the companionship of Mr. Kellish and the kindness of the Dinwoodie family he would have felt strangely desolate. For his passing devotion to the Muse, and his reputation as a scholar and a man fond of books, had seriously injured him with what is usually called "Society"—a class who think their thoughts second-hand, and who do not even respect those who do their thinking for them. That little affair with the fisher-girl could have been got over; every young man had a secret apology for his temptation—every woman, in her heart, threw the blame upon Bella. But what can Society do with a man who writes, who has original ideas, who finds books more interesting than the babble and gossip of the mess and the ball room?

George understood the position, and yet was inclined at times to complain of it. Indeed, to Mr. Kellish he complained very bitterly, for in these lonely days their friendship ripened

rapidly. They spent most of them together, and then talked and speculated half the night away. One evening some civil snub from a young lieutenant annoyed George very much, and its discussion with his friend was the natural outcome of the affair.

“What can you expect, Captain? You think differently to these people, you act in a way which is not sanctioned by their use and wont. You are, in fact, a ‘nonconformist’ in your own set, and if a man goes against the opinions and prejudices of the people he lives amongst he is just as sure to incur opposition and pain as if he ran his head against a wall. You could not even take mustard with your mutton, or eat your peas with a knife, and be innocent.”

“But what becomes of our freedom of opinion? Is a man to be sent to Coventry who dares to walk out of the groove of his set?”

“The man who dares to do it never yet trod on roses, and, till human nature changes, never will. But there are generally some blessed stragglers as well as himself. Have you read an old-fashioned book called ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’? Yes? Well, you know what those nonconformists suffered in Vanity Fair, and

you remember that in the loneliest bit of the road, when the great Pilgrim was very disconsolate, he heard the voice of a man on the same road full of hope and courage. Come, now, you haven't been quite deserted."

"No, indeed! You are always sympathetic, and so is Miss Dinwoodie."

"And how sweet and pretty and sensible she is! I think you can afford to let the crowd pass you by—the stragglers from it may prove the best company."

George smiled pleasantly, perhaps to his own thoughts—he was recalling the image of Kitty as he had seen it frequently during these days. For, his home being in great confusion, he had been a constant guest at the Dinwoodies', and Kitty had revealed herself in all those womanly ways which captivate the heart of any man worth loving. If girls would only believe it! Not in the hunting field, not in the ball-room or the tennis-court, not in any of the brilliant ways of pleasure, are they the loveliest. The charming woman is most of all charming when she smiles upon her lover from the home hearth, and when she is making sunshine and comfort in all the blessed ways of household life and duty.

And as Kitty went up and down in her pretty chintz frock, with its dimity ruffling and bows of pink ribbon—up and down, assisting her mother or reading to her father, always busy, always good-tempered—George could not help admiration growing into love ; could not help making comparisons which caused him many a time to blush with hot anger at the faults and foolishness of the past. But, however much he now knew himself to be in love with Kitty, he was conscious that she would resent at present any outspoken confession. That affair of Bella Clucas was still unforgotten—he could feel it—and there was also a certain reticence due to the memory of his mother—a reticence which he divined Kitty would expect him to observe. But love is not dependent upon words for its assurance. George did not speak, but Kitty understood that he loved her. Kitty made no sign, but George knew that he had her heart's first affection.

It was not without a pang that he took his last walk through the emptied rooms and turned the key in the closed door. Youth can afford these luxuries of sorrow. He dropped a few genuine tears and wrote a few exquisite lines

of lament and farewell. Then, with his heart thrilling with emotion and his handsome eyes misty with tears, he took Kitty for a last walk before their parting. They said a thousand sweet things to each other by their silences, by their melancholy, by their veiled glances of affection, by their delays, and their soft monosyllables.

Some turn of Fate brought them face to face with Bella. Lace Corrin walked at her side, and at that moment he looked precisely what he was said to be, "the handsomest lad in the boats." He had a pair of oars over his shoulder, but as he stooped his bright head and eager face towards Bella's he was the very embodiment of love—handsome, graceful, irresistible. Bella, in appearance, was his ideal mate. His blue fisher-guernsey was matched by her dress of blue flannel, with its plain bodice and close-fitting sleeves. Guernsey and dress alike revealed the fine proportions of their wearers; and Lace's bit of white collar and the gay-coloured kerchief knotted round his neck were almost repeated in the tiny ruffle and pink ribbon at Bella's throat.

They stood in the glory of the setting sun,

and its rose and purple gave to their young, vivid beauty a splendour that recalled the fishermen of the Saronic Gulf and the fair, proud Corinthian girls who loved them. A sudden turn brought them directly in front of George and Kitty. In passing each other Bella would be next to George, would be so close to him that they could clasp hands. Retreat for both was possible, but neither thought of it. Lace simply stepped to the other side of Bella, and thus put himself between his love and his rival. The act brought the two men together, and Lace turned on George a face that was in itself a provocation and a challenge. He stood directly in the onward path of George, and George had no mind to move a step out of it to avoid the offensive man. Such a situation became in a moment unendurable, and George, touching his cap with one finger, said haughtily, "Mr. Corrin, if you have no respect for your companion, be so good as to respect the daughter of Major Dinwoodie."

Before Lace could possibly answer Bella had retaken her position, and had compelled Lace to advance in his own direction by one of those

authoritative movements, rapid as light and imperative as fate. Yet in this flashing act of supremacy she found the opportunity to dart into Kitty's eyes a glance appealing and propitiatory—a glance answered by a simultaneous movement of their hands, which met for a second of time across the breast of the man who had been dear to one, and was now dear to the other.

Rapid and simple as Bella's glance and act had been, Kitty understood them in all their depth and fulness of meaning. When souls speak to each other words are unnecessary, and a moment of time is sufficient. On Bella's part there had been a perfect act of renunciation, and it had somehow not only included an entreaty for personal consideration, but an assurance of her good-will and good wishes for the woman whose love was to be honoured where her own had been wronged and dishonoured. There are women capable of such acts of nobility—Bella was among them.

In a few moments the painful irritation of the meeting wore away in silence, and George, looking anxiously at the pretty girl by his side, said: "I think I ought to confess some-

thing to you, Miss Kitty; may I speak to-night?"

"Not to-night. Before confession there ought to be plenty of time for reflection."

"Some time may I confess?"

"Some time—yes."

He took her hand and they walked home in the gloaming with the joy of promise in their hearts—a joy unnamed and unanalysed, and all the sweeter and vaster for its beautiful vagueness.

George went away early in the morning, glad to leave the scene of so much mortification and failure. He had often wondered how he would feel if brought face to face with Bella, and he had found that in such a crisis he had hardly thought of her. All his anxiety had been about his own position. The girl's great beauty had lost all charm for him. He could find defects in it where there were none. He could congratulate himself upon the failure of the evil scheme which had once been the delightful object of all his thoughts. He could realise with a shiver of dislike what a burden the girl would have already become to him. But it did not enter his mind to try and realise what the

position of Bella would have been had not her soul been purer and stronger than his own.

The little steamer *King Orry*, sailing between Douglas and Whitehaven, landed him at the latter port about sunset. He understood that Robert Pennington's carriage would meet him there, but he had no idea as to his further journey. It was a lovely spring evening, with a whole horizon full of blue, sleepy ocean seaward; landward there was a quiet, aristocratic town whose peace seemed to suffer a kind of invasion in the swaggering turmoil made by their steamer entering between the two fine sea-walls.

Ere he had time to land George saw what he had been very certain to see—a handsome landau, with servants in brown and yellow livery. He was relieved at once of all responsibility. "Squire Pennington's carriage, sir." It had a strange sort of familiarity, and the air of the servants invested him with a certain proprietorship in it. Their drive took them some miles beyond the wealthy old town, and in the gloaming they entered a park whose greenness and stillness could at that hour be felt. The oaks which lined the avenues or

made coverts for the deer and the birds had been growing for centuries. It was a place where Nature in a great measure had had her will, and such places straightway become beautiful and peaceful.

The trees rustled and looked glad, and after a two miles' drive they parted to the right and left, and showed him a large dwelling on which the grey twilight fell softer than sleep. There were lights in all the windows, and the wide door stood open and revealed the hall in a blaze of welcome. When the carriage stopped before it Robert Pennington advanced and took his nephew by both hands.

"This is the young Squire!" he said. "This is the heir of Pennington! You will give him your love and service?" He had turned in speaking so as to face the men and women drawn up to welcome the new comer. And it was impossible for a heart so fond of affection as George Pennington's was not to be moved by the ready responses and the sympathetic smiles that greeted him.

"Thou art grown bravely—thou art far away bonnier than I thought for!" cried one old woman. "Ey, but thou liked me well before

thou could say so ; thou did that ! T' Squire be thanked for thy home-bringing ! ”

And George knew precisely what graceful thing to say, and what to do, in each case of remembrance. Robert Pennington was completely satisfied with the young man ; he was proud of the object of his love and generosity. Everything had been arranged for his comfort in the most sumptuous style. It was evident that, in thus publicly acknowledging him as his heir, the Squire determined to do so to the utmost extent of honour and favour. And George was left in no doubt as to his position. After dinner, as the two men sat talking over the business relating to the break-up of the home in the island, the elder one said plainly : “ George, I have made you heir of Pennington. I have not taken this step without long consideration. I shall not alter my intentions for any light reason. I intend you to have the fullest liberty. Your religious convictions, your matrimonial intentions, your political views, I shall not interfere with any further than as one man may advise another. Our opinions on these and other matters may differ, and for any matter of opinion I shall not change my inten-

tion regarding your future. One vice may prove unpardonable in my sight—I mean gambling, either on the turf or at the table. You will easily find other things to interest you. The stables are full of horses, and I wish you to join the hunt—to take your share generously in all the athletic and elegant games which belong to your years and position. Here you will be second only to myself. In London you will be absolutely your own master.”

“Then you wish me to reside partly in London?”

“I believe in alternations of life as long as a man is able to enjoy them. There comes a time, George, when we like our days of the same kind, when habit reconciles us to the loss of that capacity for change and pleasure which youth enjoys; but until then, city and country, drawing-room and hunting-field, enhance each other’s charms. They make the same antithesis as that transition from wish to fulfilment, and fulfilment to wish, which is the basis of so much of what we call happiness.”

“Dear uncle, you open up a very delightful vista to me.”

“I hope so. But I am well aware men don’t

live in such vistas without money. You will find at Longman's, Leadenhall-street, £8,000 a-year to your credit. That has always been the heir's allowance from the estate. No, do not thank me. I understand what you would say far better. I enjoy the giving more than you enjoy the gift. We are quits, George."

"I will deserve your kindness ; that will be the best thanks."

"Precisely ; and I trust you. I trust you fully, trust your honour and integrity to the uttermost. I will listen to no evil words about you. Young men will do foolish things, and they will have enemies glad to repeat them. Unless you are your own accuser, I will be deaf to all such reports."

"If accusation is deserved I will be my own accuser."

"My dear George, those are wise words. Come to me in any strait. I love you, and, except in regard to the one vice I have specified, you will find me patient and generous. For a gambler I have no toleration ; every sin is possible to a man who can throw dice with the devil, and risk time and eternity upon the speed of a horse or the turn of a card."

He spoke with a stern passion so entirely at variance with his usual manner that no answer seemed possible, and perhaps the emphatic silence which followed was the most forcible application of the words.

George Pennington, during the past weeks, had made many plans for his future. His uncle's letters had given him hopes of some permanent good—perhaps a pleasant Government sinecure—perhaps a military commission equally desirable. He had even contemplated the study of the law. He was prepared to take the first road through life that offered, and fight with all its difficulties. This splendour of opportunity! this largess of love and wealth and pleasure so freely offered! He had never imagined such good fortune. For the gifts of God put all our best dreams to shame. And George, in the midst of the luxurious comforts of his own apartments, surveyed his wonderful destiny with a heart full of the warmest gratitude. He acknowledged God the Giver. He made the noblest resolutions for his future conduct. He fully intended to keep them, for the man wholly scoundrel or wholly angel dwells elsewhere than on earth. In humanity

there is no such thing as a straight line or an unmixed colour.

The days and weeks that followed were full of content to both uncle and nephew. George was learning the extent of the estate, the names and qualities of the tenants, the value of every farm, the methods of agriculture, all the delightful routine of husbandry without its cares and labours.

The country was enchanting. His poetic nature realised its beauties. He carried in his heart the silence of wood and fell and the sylvan charm of an outdoor life. In the autumn the Earl of Lansdale filled his adjoining castle with guests, and the crack of the rifle and shouts of the hunters were heard among the stubble and in the young plantations all around. George was a speedy favourite. He ably filled the place in field sports which his uncle had long vacated. His beauty and grace and wealthy expectations made him the idol of the Countess's splendid receptions, the favoured gallant of the young and beautiful.

Even the gentlemen spoke highly of him. Robert Pennington had thought deeply on all public subjects, and George had the art to

clothe his uncle's ideas in brilliant language. The Earl himself listened to the young fellow with half-shut eyes and grave reflections as to his political influence. For Lord Lansdale's ideas of men were not influenced by time or death. He recognised them as Whigs or Tories. His sole conception of the universe was a political one. In the winter, when they were both in London, he resolved to see more of George Pennington. It might be to the interest of his Party to secure so brilliant a thinker and speaker. In the meantime he watched him closely, for this nobleman was born suspicious. If he heard the world praising anything or any one he was always disposed to define the object of its idolatry as "a humbug."

At the beginning of the season George went to London. He had rooms in one of the most fashionable streets, he had everything that money could purchase to make them suitable for a young man of his pretensions. Even the proverbial skeleton was in his case promptly and kindly dismissed, for it must be admitted that the thought of the secret which Lord Penrith held was a shadow in his sunshine. He had not feared him while their paths ran so

far apart. But now that they were likely to meet in the same drawing-rooms and sit at the same tables he was constantly asking himself how Penrith would act.

At the first dinner given by the Earl of Lansdale the question was answered. Penrith was present, but the dinner was a large political one, and in the crowd George did not notice the friend who had once been so near to his soul. Perhaps it was fortunate, for the knowledge of his presence might have dashed the charming brilliancy of his conversation. As it was, Penrith listened with his oldtime delight. He made haste to see him when the party rose, he clasped his hand with the lingering fervour of bygone days, he drew him gently into the seclusion of a curtained embrasure and said, "My dear George, I want to speak to you—to assure you—there was a piece of paper—you remember? I want you to feel as if it had never been."

"I cannot feel that. Oh, my dear friend, I——"

"Yes! yes! Put it out of your memory. With these words it dies out of mine. Upon my honour!"

It is useless to say that George was much moved—really moved; that Penrith felt his emotion, that their silent handclasp was a bond which George knew Penrith would never break. Henceforward they were friends; not intimate, perhaps, but conscious of the fidelity of each other's heart, and ready at any hour to prove it.

During the winter he published his poems. People asked if ever there was such a brilliant young man. With his handsome face and all his songs about him, he took Society captive. Charming women sang them; they were quoted and copied and recited, and "the beautiful fisher-maiden" who was idealised in them became the subject about which lords and ladies delighted to speculate and wonder. This literary fame brought him constant offers of literary employment. It was a day of "Keepsakes" and "Albums" and "Souvenirs," and every separate one solicited a little gem for its pages. Squire Pennington laughed at all this adulation—perhaps he was also a little proud of it; but the old Earl was angry and disappointed in his political *protégé*.

"Nebulous brilliance," he said, tartly and scornfully; "'stuff that dreams are made of.'"

I am disappointed. The young man lacks definite edge to his intellectual character."

In the midst of all this wealth of acclaim George lived for many weeks with a gay satisfaction which lacked nothing of completeness but the ability to bear it without weariness. For at length reaction began. The same forms of adulation grew tiresome; thoughts uncalled for presented themselves. Conscience, which had not been troublesome, became imperative. He thought of all the noble resolves he had formed; they had been without substance and had vanished away. He thought of Kitty with a sense of remorse. He had sent her no token of his remembrance. Among so many fair women he had forgotten the claim which she had upon him—a claim which no spoken words could make more binding on his manhood. He thought, and with a singular persistence, of the strange being who had saved his life that night when he had been abandoned at the edge of the storm by Ruthie and Gale Clucas—who had become so familiar with him, and to whom he had so often opened out his whole soul. Plenty of promises to write had been given, but only at the very first had they been kept, and that in a

most meagre fashion. In the midst of the reckless dissipation into which he was gradually drifting he had intervals of such reproachful reflections, but in the main he was becoming more and more thoughtless and self-indulgent.

One Sabbath morning, when all the service bells of London were ringing, George sat by the fire listening to them. He was weary of himself. Life had a bad taste to him ; he was half inclined to desert the trivial interests which were occupying his thoughts and time. The fact was he had been losing money, and his extravagances were beginning to call upon him. He felt poor, he had a bill to meet, and did not know where to get the necessary funds. His account was overdrawn. He was ashamed to ask his uncle's help. He was only heir-at-will, the estate was unentailed ; he could not, therefore, discount his future.

Into the midst of these unpleasant reveries entered Mr. Kellish. George leaped up with both hands outstretched. The love in the dark seamed face and the joy at his warm welcome was such a real thing that it went straight to the young man's heart. He threw his arm across the shoulder of his visitor, and forced

him into his own chair. "The easiest of the lot, you may be sure," he said, with a laugh. "And when did you leave the island? And how did you find me out? I've had breakfast, but I can eat again. Let us have breakfast together."

Kellish was overpowered by his enthusiasm. The tears shone through his bright glances. He suffered himself to be much made of, and watched his gay, lovable host with an affection that went straight to the heart, as the sunshine goes to the root of a flower.

The hours went by, they never counted them. They were talking of real things, of the loves and hatreds of the past, and of George's expectations in the future. It was near midnight when Kellish spoke of leaving. "I was so hungry to be near you," he said, "that I have been hard to satisfy. Seeing you is not enough, though I have seen you every day."

"Seen me? Where?"

"I have a room opposite here. It has been my whole life to watch you come in and out—to read your book and all that was said about it—to admire you riding in the Row with some great beauty—to follow you to the theatre or

the opera-house, where you were all the play and all the music to me."

"I am not worthy of so much love, Mr. Kellish ; why do you give it to me ?"

"Can you tell me why you like De Burg and dislike Martelle? The beginnings of liking and disliking are generally as simple as the opening of a door. I had a hard fate when I was young. I was abroad for more than twenty years ; when I came back I was forgotten. All I had cared for were dead to me. On that night when we first spoke I was wretched and despairing. Your sweet courtesy, your bright face, your actual care for my life, were an incredible comfort and hope. Every soul must love something. I had had nothing but memories to love for so long that I was starved. Do you comprehend, then, what I made of you ?"

"You are a very good fellow, and I have had far more real pleasure talking with you than ever I had among the laughing and dancing crowds I have lately frequented. Do not desert me any more. I need some one older than myself, some one I can trust. Be my friend, then ; my true friend."

"That I promised long ago. If I could only

do anything for you ; but you are so rich, so prosperous, so happy. What is there left to give but love ? ”

“ You are mistaken. I am this night very unhappy. I am so poor that I do not know how to meet a bill that must be paid to-morrow.”

“ If a thousand pounds would be of service, take them and give me the greatest pleasure I can have.”

George looked at the man with utter amazement. He had his wallet in his hand, and was counting out the amount in £100 notes.

“ Do not disappoint me. I have no use for the money, unless it can be of use to you.”

“ Mr. Kellish, it will be a godsend to me. I will pay you——”

“ I will not lend it ; you must take it as a gift, or not at all. I do not want to become a bore to you, and I should do so if my face was only a reminder of a debt. Come, now, take it ! you can make me so happy.”

“ Thank you.”

“ Thank *you*, Captain.”

There was a moment's silence, but George gave his friend, as he took the notes, a glance full of truth and kindness, and Kellish, to relieve

the consciousness of both, lifted an old Roman coin that had been used as a whist counter, and began to talk about it.

"Titus, eh? Not a bad fellow for the world he lived in—a different world to this."

"Yes, indeed! I had a fancy once for old coins; they are not worth much in the way of meeting a bill."

"No, you can't buy bread and beef with them; but this half-obliterated image of the old Roman is a kind of wizard. Look at it—the centuries collapse, England is a green waste, and up springs the triumphal arch! I can see the conqueror and the captives passing through it; I can hear the shouts of the populace making a Roman holiday—— But there are the midnight clocks! I must go now. I hope I have not wearied you?"

"You have been a great deliverance, a true friend to me. Come soon again, I cannot thank you as I wish to now."

Kellish smiled an answer and closed the door softly behind him as he went away, but his heart was in a tempest of fear. "He is in danger! he is in danger! I must get nearer, nearer, nearer to him! If I spend all I have

I must buy the right to be at his side ! I must ! I must !” Muttering such frantic words, he crossed the street and admitted himself to the house in which he lodged. The room in it which he called his own was a good room, well furnished, but desolate and uncared-for. He was unconscious of its discomfort. He had but one care—the danger of the son he loved better than his own life. He lit no light, but sank into a chair and covered his face. Man would have said that he was silent, but God heard the agonising cry of his heart—
“ The sins of the fathers ! Unto the third and fourth generation ! Redeemer of men, let me alone bear the burden ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

"LIKE AS A FATHER."

Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are.

The soul that gives is the soul that lives.

Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth.

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every
time we fall.

THERE is a law of gravitation in the moral as well as the natural world. When a young man has begun to fall he is as certain to continue his downward course to ruin as the apple loosened from the bough is certain to reach the ground—unless the supernatural interfere. In one case the human hand may arrest the downward progress of the apple, in the other the Hand of God may arrest and sustain the falling mortal.

But such supernatural aid had not been

solicited by George Pennington, and for more than four years he had been falling with a speed only possible to those who have gold or the want of gold to aid them. He had been conscious of his condition for a long time—helplessly conscious of it—and one afternoon in May he knew himself to be almost at the abyss of ruin, which was the termination of his downward course.

He was facing it as a man so sensitive and emotional was likely to do—in unmistakable terror. He had hoped until hope had nothing to cling to, and his mental suffering reacted upon his nervous physique until he had constantly-recurring paroxysms of feverish anguish and cold despair.

He was in the same splendid rooms, but they had suffered the same spoliation that had blighted his own beauty and mental strength. The bright sunshine revealed the unrenewed wear and tear, the faded colouring, the tarnished gilding, the general air of recklessness and want of prosperity which shows that even menials have scented the coming destruction, and have hastened to take their own small advantages out of the condition.

It was one item of the misery George Pennington was enduring that his nature was keenly sensitive to such small things, the stings and pricks of his misfortune hurt him as well as its outrageous slings and arrows. He saw in the eyes of the servants, and heard in their voices, the reflection and echo of a verdict whose intolerable shame made him burn and shiver in anticipation.

"My dear George!" It was Matt Kellish who spoke. He touched the fevered hand of the young man and turned his face to the light with alarm. "You are ill. Now what is hounding you to death? I have seen your misery for a long time. Surely you can tell me."

He forced him to sit down and then placed himself opposite. "Tell me—tell me all—as you would have told your mother. I shall be just as pitiful."

"I know you will. Oh, Matt, if I only durst tell you!"

"What have you done?"

"You will despise—you will desert me."

"I will not, for anything."

"I have written a name I had no right to write."

"You mean that you have forged a name?"

"Yes."

"Whose?"

There was a dead silence. The faces of both men were white and despairing. The elder sat with his hands tightly locked, and his dark, sorrowful eyes were fixed upon his companion. The hands of the younger hung loosely downward, his gaze was rivetted upon the ground.

"George! There is surely something to be done. Do not waste time. Tell me the name."

"It was Sutcliffe's. I have been there. I feel as if there was nothing to be done."

"Why? Have you seen him—spoken to him?"

"No; he was from home. I saw Harriet. She lectured me constantly about my extravagance and all my sins. She thought she was kind. I felt as if it would be impossible to trust her. She has three sons now; she offered to call her baby after me if I would reform. I told her not to do it, and she cried. Her tears and reproaches hurt me. I came away and said nothing."

"Blessed are the merciful women! Mrs. Sutcliffe has never been tempted—her way has

been hedged in on both sides. I am glad you said nothing to her."

"Harriet is the reflection of her husband, therefore I fear him."

"How much, George?"

"£900."

"How long?"

"Ninety days ; there are thirty-six hours remaining."

"Did you draw the money yourself?"

"No ; the note was given to Jack Derby ; he cashed it."

"Ah ! Then I handed it to Jack ?"

"Yes ; I was going to Pennington that morning, and I asked you to give it to him when he called."

"I remember. There is a way out of this, George. Let me think."

He rose and went to the window and looked out of it across the square, green and beautiful in the sunshine. He saw nothing of it. His vision was recalling far different scenes—a dark, crowded court with monotonous, awful voices, and small gas points struggling with the dense fog ; a blank, stony prison full of misery and crime ; intolerable humiliations, intolerable

society ; partings worse than death, shameful exile, and hell in mortal life. Driven from one point of agony to another, his soul condensed into a few moments the untold anguish of years.

But the sufferings which had once shaken him like a tempest had also steadied him like a frost. He had the mastery at home ; he could cross his desires, he could command alike his weakest and his most disorderly point without any fear of mental mutiny. In a few minutes of time he had conceived and accepted an act of sublime affection. He had something of the mercy of God in his heart when he returned to the side of the miserable offender. It softened his touch and his voice.

" George, there is but one way out of this devil's net. I must take your place, must assume the guilt, and if it be necessary suffer the punishment."

" I would never permit that—even if it were possible."

" It is quite possible and you must permit it. In a few minutes I will convince you. This is how it was : You owed Derby £900. You were going to Pennington, and you left the money with me to pay the debt. I used the money for

my own purposes, and gave Derby the forged note. Fortunately, I have bought several horses for Colonel Sutcliffe, and we have had quite sufficient business together to make it probable I would select his name."

"*I forged the note. I will bear the blame.*"

"*I forged the note. It is my fault and my blame. But I have yet sufficient securities left to cover the amount. I will take them to Colonel Sutcliffe. He has nothing to gain by prosecuting me. I have done well by him in several cases. I have no reputation to lose, and no one knows much about me. If I disappear, who will ask why or wherefore? I lose no one but you. If I let you suffer we must both suffer. If I suffer alone I suffer alone, and I have the unspeakable joy of sparing you.*"

"You could not spare me. Night and day I should be tormented by the thought of my own shameful escape and the injustice I was doing you."

"A man in great emergencies must think of others as well as himself. Such a revelation as this would kill your uncle. Public opinion is the breath of your sister's nostrils ; think of her shame."

"For her sake Sutcliffe might compromise the matter if he knew I was the criminal."

"Do you think so? Then you do not know the man. He is a martinet about his honour. He would make a glory of his shame; and as for compounding a felony, he would see you stand in every court in England first."

"Oh! Matt, what am I to do?"

"Precisely what I tell you. Leave the affair in my hands. You have got to the very bottom of the devil's hill now, George—turn back—turn back, my dear fellow."

"I will! I will! If you get me out of this horrible mess, Matt, I vow to you that I will cut loose from every entanglement. I will leave London altogether. I will go back to my uncle, and never wound his love or waste his generosity again."

"I believe you will, George. And you must not lose the estate. It is lawfully yours—I mean, it has been promised to you for so long. You are only thirty years old, and all your life is before you. I am sixty; I am not in health. I may not live long in any case; I have not done much good with my life, let me at least give you an opportunity to redeem your wasted years."

Misery is misery past all controversy, and misery is always selfish. To get ease at any cost is its imperative demand. George hesitated and protested, but finally accepted the offer of relief made him. He did it, truly, with tears and contrition, and boundless expressions of affection, and Kellish appeared to find a sombre satisfaction in the young man's love and sorrow.

"I shall leave for Sutcliffe to-night and do all that it is possible to do. If the very worst comes—remember, George, *I forged the note*, and I will stand to that statement, though you denied it to my face. You are innocent ; I only am to blame. There must be no half admissions ; you know absolutely nothing about it. Whatever I say, do not contradict me. If you implicate yourself in the least I will never forgive you. Come, now let us talk of something else. There is no need to discuss what is settled."

"I will tell you a strange thing—a very awful thing ! This morning, just before dawn, I sat here silent, motionless, weary with miserable thoughts. The door was shut, but I knew that some one entered. A great fear and awe forced my soul prostrate. In a moment of time I saw the horror of my whole life. I abhorred myself.

I wanted to hide myself from myself. Then I knew that my mother was at my side—*the innocent for the guilty*, I heard these words. I heard—I felt—oh, Matt! Matt! I cannot tell what awful intercourse my soul had. It was weeping, shivering, full of such agony as it has in dreams, when the body can neither share its sufferings nor its consolations. Do you think I was dreaming? Is it possible for a spirit to love those it has left behind?—to visit them? to talk with them? Matt, you have studied every side of humanity, have you personally ever known anything like this?"

"I should think I was pure clay if I had not.

Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,
Who ne'er the mournful midnight hours
Weeping upon his bed has sate,
He knows you not, ye Heavenly Powers.

But I have been nourished upon the bread of sorrow. I have sat waiting for these Heavenly Powers when my sorrow was far too great for weeping. If they are caring for you—reproaching, warning, comforting—I work with *them*, and how great is my work! Now I am sure my plan is right. *She* knows it. If she foresaw

the trouble, she has also known what I would feel constrained to do—being your friend.”

“You think, then, it was no dream—that it was really my angel mother?”

“Do you believe that your soul exists after death?”

“Yes.”

“Then believe that it can talk with the living. What is man but an imprisoned soul? If a free man can reach a prisoner he can talk with him; if a freed soul can reach a captive soul it can talk to it. If souls survive, will their affections die? What kind of a soul would it be without affections? Will not the being which thinks within us before death think also after death? Will it not think of those it loved best in life? If so, will it not desire to communicate with them? And if spirit can act upon inert substances, why cannot it act upon intelligent beings; I have no doubt your mother visited you. While I am away fasten your soul to the memory. Such a visit was not idly made; find out its purpose and serve it. Now, then, I must go. However we meet again, this parting was well made, I am sure of that.”

They said good-bye with their souls in their

faces and scarce a word on their lips. But their hands burned with their passionate grip, and great tears sprang unbidden from their secret source and dropped upon them.

The next afternoon Kellish was standing in the library at Sutcliffe Manor. He had sent his card to the Colonel, and in a few minutes he answered the request it made. He came into the room smiling, with his hand extended. He thought only that Mr. Matthew Kellish had heard of some wonderful colt and wanted to make a few pounds by effecting a sale.

When Kellish pointedly passed by the offered courtesy he sat down a little haughtily, and his manner and curt inquiry as to the reason of the visit proved to be the key-note of the interview. Instinctively Kellish divined that there was no hope in this man, and after a moment's hesitation he stated bluntly the business upon which he had come.

As he spoke the Colonel's face grew sterner and sterner. Kellish had laid what securities he still possessed on the table, and the Colonel pushed them indignantly aside. His attitude chilled and dashed the suppliant, and he made the very worst of a bad case.

When he ceased speaking the Colonel said sternly, "This impudent forgery, Mr. Kellish, is in the first place a crime against the laws of the country; in the second place it is a double insult to myself personally—you have used the name of a gentleman of honourable family—an officer once of Her Majesty's Army—a magistrate now of Her Majesty's Government—to pass a fraudulent note with ; and you have dared to think that I would condone such an offence and make myself the partner of your rascality. Sir, I would give up every acre, every shilling I possess, rather than be guilty of such an infamy. You have made your confession to one of Her Majesty's magistrates, nothing remains for me but to commit you for trial.' I am sorry, Mr. Kellish—very sorry—very sorry, indeed ; but I must do my duty."

"Of course, sir ; I would not much mind if it could be done without the knowledge of Mr. George Pennington. It is hard to lose his good opinion."

"He knows nothing of this affair then ?"

"No, sir, nothing at all ; if it could be kept from him——"

"Mr. Kellish, I must tell you that I think your

influence upon my brother-in-law has been very bad indeed. I have no doubt you are to blame for all his wicked extravagances and objectionable society. You are an old man, you should have respected his youth ; in the meantime, Mr. Kellish, if you wish to write to your lawyer——"

" I wish to write only to Mr. Pennington."

This letter was short and rather formal, but it hurt the man who received it as much as if every word were a sword thrust :—

" DEAR MR. PENNINGTON,—I came to Sutcliffe to tell the Colonel I had forged a note with his name ninety days ago. I used the money you left for Derby for my own purposes, and then gave the note to him in its place. Forgive me! Colonel Sutcliffe, being a magistrate, is obliged on my own confession to commit me. I should like to see you for an hour, and correct as far as I can any injury I have done you as to your accounts, &c.

" MATTHEW KELLISH."

This note brought George to Sutcliffe at once. He arrived in the morning, and, hiring a gig, drove himself over to the Manor House. In the park he met Harriet walking with her

children. Her brother's appearance shocked her; she left her babies with their nurses and accompanied him to the house.

"I am ill, Harriet," he said, fretfully, "and this trouble of my friend's has quite unmanned me."

"I think it is dreadful. Harry told me. He is feeling awfully about his name being used for such a disgraceful thing. He could not sleep, and worried and scolded until I was sick with a past terror—for oh, George! I remember that affair with Penrith. I do hope there is no fear of scandal from that. Do you think this wrong will lead to any whisper of it? I suppose I am foolish; but, oh, dear! if you had seen and heard Harry! I think he would desert me if he knew about Penrith."

"Do let Penrith alone. Penrith is a gentleman—he is something more and better. I have no doubt Harry fumed—the Sutcliffes must take precious good care of what honour they have got."

"George! You shall not speak of my husband in that way."

"I shall speak as I think, Harriet, even if your husband were here. He had better not fume at me, or I will give his honour something

to fume about. Kellish is my dearest friend—he has done your husband more than one good turn ; why, he got him Peerless for fifty guineas, and he is now worth a thousand. I say there are times when gentlemen let honour slip into something kinder and nobler."

"Harry says the man has been your ruin ; that was the chief reason he was so hard with him."

"I will thank Colonel Sutcliffe not to interfere with my affairs. Kellish my ruin ! Why, I have been his ruin. The man has given me everything he had. I owe Kellish £18,000, and he never took an acknowledgment for it or a shilling of interest. No, he never even reminded me of my debt."

"There was something wicked in such reckless kindness. I cannot understand it."

"*The man loves me !* and, oh, I am so unworthy of his love ! so shamefully unworthy !"

"I think you must be crazy, George, or you are ill. I can see that you have a fever. I shall send for a doctor as soon as you are in the house."

"I am not going to stay in Sutcliffe's house. I was only coming here to talk with him about this business. Do you think I would eat at his table, or sleep under his roof, after he has sent

my friend to prison? I would perish on the roadside first."

"So, then, you put this man—this forger—before an honourable gentleman like your brother-in-law?"

"I put Kellish ten million times before Sutcliffe. He is incomparably his superior in everything."

"I saw the man as the constable took him away—he looked like a scoundrel. Such a dreadful face!"

"Not half so much like a scoundrel as I look. Dreadful face, indeed! If you only knew the reason of those scars and seams, you would know a story of suffering and self-denial which might make angels weep."

"Of course, he could tell you anything—a man like that! Nobody knows anything about him. If he were a gentleman people would know."

"I know. He has honour, truth, gentle manners, and a kind heart. He had plenty of money until I squandered it. He has read everything, and he has thought deeply on all subjects. He can sail a yacht like a North Sea skipper; he can climb like a Shetlander. In a

hunting-field he takes everything. He knows a horse better than any man in England."

"And a pack of cards?"

"Perhaps ; but he never touches one."

"And how to ruin a young man that trusts him?"

"Harriet Sutcliffe, I should have made your honourable husband tingle for his stainless name long before this had it not been for Matthew Kellish. He has saved me from—crime! yes, crime! he has been a conscience to me—he has been—oh! what has he not been? I am going to the village, I will put you down at this gate."

"You are ill, almost delirious. No one knows what you may say. You are going home with me."

"I am going to my friend. I shall stand by him. I have a great mind to claim a share of his fault, so that I may go with him to its punishment."

"George! George! Oh, what dreadful things you make me suspect!"

"Suspect, if you wish—perhaps you may come near to the truth." He had drawn up at the gate leading to the village, and he assisted Harriet to the ground. She was white with fear.

"You will return very soon—for my sake?"

"No, I will not return." He nodded back to her and the very force of habit made him try to smile—a momentary wretched gleam over a woe-ful face. She could not put it out of her memory.

As Kellish had not yet been formally committed, he was able to command a small private room, and there George found him. A man accustomed to the presence of criminals could never have doubted a moment as to which of these two was the real one. Kellish was serene and almost cheerful, he met George with a smile which made the young man sink weeping into a chair.

"I want to die," he whispered, "I want to die, Matt. I am come to stay here with you."

"You are very sick, George, and you must make all the speed you can back to Sutcliffe."

"I will not enter the house."

"Then go to Pennington. You can do me no good. My course is plain enough. I will tell you the very worst, and we will accept it together. Then if you would do me the only favour you can—if you would make me happy, leave me alone. I care nothing for being in prison—'stone walls do not a prison make' for me—unless you see me there. I am perfectly indifferent to every indignity the law can offer

me if you do not see and suffer in my supposed humiliation. My separation from you is the only grief now possible to me. I do not think it will be a long one."

"Years."

"Perhaps it may be seven years. I can reduce them to five. I may be at liberty at the end of two. George, I am going to hit your love for me a hard blow ; will it stand it?"

"Nothing can weaken it."

"I am going to tell you something of myself. When I was about your age I was living just such a life as you have been living. I got into a desperate difficulty. I forged a note on my most intimate friend. He became my bitterest enemy. He prosecuted me to the utmost of his power. I was sentenced to twenty-five years of penal servitude. In my third year I fell into kind hands. I made friends, by-and-by I was released on certain conditions, and put in offices of trust over other unfortunate sinners. In taking a gang from one station to another I nearly perished with them. I received great praise for my conduct at the time. I had almost ceased to feel the bonds of my slavery when my freedom came. I returned to Eng-

land. My inheritance had been given to another. All I loved were dead to me ; for me to have come to life again would have made misery and shame ; I determined to go back to New South Wales, and went to Liverpool for that purpose. Walking on the quays looking for a ship I saw a steamer going to the Isle of Man. A sudden impulse made me board her, and while I hesitated she sailed."

At this point he ceased speaking ; George had drawn close to him, had taken his hands, something was interpreting their hearts, they had come closer to each other than the mere touch of flesh and blood indicated. In a few moments Kellish resumed, in a low voice : "Listen to what I intend. When I am brought to trial I shall plead 'Guilty,' and throw myself upon the mercy of the law, so then there will be no need to examine witnesses, to make accusations or defences ; all will be settled in a few hours. I do not fear the exile, I have many friends over yonder. The climate suits me, it will cure this dreadful cough, which has troubled me all the past winter. When the affair dies out of memory you can make a trip to see this new land—it is worth it—and I shall live con-

tent in the prospect. Time gets over. And besides, George, you know that my anchor is made fast to another world. I ride at rest or stem the waves, and if I sink it is to 'another sea.' Be comforted, dear boy, and go to Pennington, tell your uncle as much as you think best, and throw yourself on his love—he has a father's heart for a prodigal, I know it by my own."

The gaoler came in at this point, and the parting, fortunately for George, was apparently a formal one. He went to the hotel and hired a carriage to take him post-haste to Pennington. He was very ill when he entered it, and the journey proved a terrible one to him.

For the Lord shook the man body and soul. Remorse, and pity, and shame, and self-abasement drove his distracted soul about her house. She ran to and fro to all the doors of life, hoping to find some exit from her miserable dwelling. And, oh, how this mental agony tortured him physically! From head to feet he was in intolerable pain. When he arrived at his journey's end he was lifted out of the carriage. He felt his uncle's arm around him, and had barely strength and sense to whisper: "I am come home to die."

CHAPTER XVI.

A SACRIFICE ACCEPTED.

He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears.—Isa. xxv. 8.

Haply the river of Time
As it draws to the ocean may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast—
As the pale waste widens around him,
As the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

ARNOLD,

FROM the lowest depth there is a path to the loftiest height. In that still borderland, lying within the shadow of death, George Pennington, seeing nothing else, saw this. After being many weeks in the helpless, semi-conscious condition of typhoid fever, he began slowly to come back to healthy life, with relapses and pauses, however, which baffled medicine, and were only to be accounted for by a continuance

of the mental conditions which had in the first place induced his illness.

His first intelligent inquiry regarded Kellish. "Has he been tried?" he asked, in a despairing whisper.

"Yes," answered Robert Pennington, "he got off better than he deserved. There was no trial to speak of. The man acknowledged himself to be a returned convict. It seems his record was a very good one—an exceptionally good one—and he expressed such regret about the crime that he only received seven years. Sutcliffe also spoke in his favour; he says Kellish looked very ill."

"Has he sailed?"

"He was sent to Dartmoor. He will not leave England at all. Why do you worry about him?"

"*I love him!*" He sighed wearily and closed his eyes, and Robert Pennington had a sense of injury in his heart as he watched the hopeless, wretched look on his nephew's face. For three months he had been at his side night and day. He had spent money freely in the settlement of the debts and liabilities of his reckless London life, and yet George had not said to him, "I love you."

But love's strength is sacrifice. In sickness and sorrow it suffers a sublime change—it demands less and gives more. When the calm September days brought with them so much of health to the invalid as enabled him to take short walks in the garden, Robert Pennington was troubled to find that the constant melancholy—at some hours the restless despair—of his nephew did not vanish with his physical weakness. He spoke to him cheerfully of his affairs, hopefully of the future, he showed him in every possible way that all the past was forgiven, and it did seem a little hard that such magnanimity of long-suffering love could not banish the regrets for a life which had been altogether such a woeful failure.

One evening the two men sat silently in the dining-room. The wax candles made but a small circle of light, but the blazing logs threw fitful flashes over their thoughtful faces, and made all kinds of shadowy pictures on the walls.

“George, I cannot bear this silent sorrow of yours any longer. To-day I saw you in the summer-house—your arms were on the table, your face buried in them. You were sobbing

as men never sob unless there is some awful reason for it. For false love, or even dead love, we make no such hopeless crying. You have no business troubles, your health is returning rapidly, and if you want an opportunity to wipe out every past folly there is a grand one open to you. England is calling for soldiers, and gallant men are doing and suffering in a cause so just that even our hereditary enemy, France, is on our side. George, you promised me once that if you sinned you would be your own accuser. Have you anything to tell me? Is there anything for me to forgive? George, speak to me."

Then the young man lifted his bent face, and in a low, intense voice told the whole story of his acquaintance with Matt Kellish. He told it simply just as it happened—all his faults and how Matt had borne with them—all his sins and how he had reproved him, and reasoned with him, and, finally, paid their terrible price. "I have heard of guardian angels," he said, "Matt Kellish was mine. If I had taken his advice!—oh, if I had only done as he entreated me, I should not be this night the most woeful soul out of hell."

During the recital Robert Pennington's face changed continually. He seemed to be full of some new-born thought and to be examining it with an earnestness that was almost impatient. He asked many questions—not about George's experiences—but about Kellish—about his personal appearance, his age, his voice—in fact the whole interest of the confession for Robert Pennington settled upon Matt Kellish.

"You have not said one word of reproach to me, uncle ; and yet I have deserved that you should cast me off for ever. I have done everything that you told me not to do."

"Shall I be harder to you than this stranger? You are the son of my only brother—of my elder brother, who was always kind to me, whom I loved and admired above all other men. The question of forgiveness is settled, George. You know that I have forgiven you. I am thinking now of this noble fellow who is suffering for you. We must go and see him. My political influence is great. I have hitherto asked no favours. I can command what I ask, and we must not rest until he is released."

"I ought to take his place. I never intended to let him carry out such a sacrifice. When I

came to Pennington I came intending to tell you all. I hoped you would have influence with Sutcliffe. If not, I think I should have been man enough to face my deserts. This shameful cowardice, forced upon me by sickness which left me unconscious and helpless, is not my fault ; so far I may make excuse. To-day I walked nearly three miles without much fatigue, and as I sat in the summer-house resting I came to the conclusion that the time had come to tell you all. I was weeping for this necessity. You have been so patient, so gentle, so good, and I love you truly."

" But we must do nothing without consulting Mr. Kellish. He gave you first his love, then he emptied his purse for you. His honour, his liberty, his life—nothing has been withheld ! My dear George, he has the right to say whether you are to make void all this transcendent travail of soul. I am glad you told me. I feel myself nobler for the knowledge of such humanity. I fear there will be some necessary delay in getting permission to visit him, from the Home Secretary, but I will take the first steps to-night ; and I will write to the chaplain at Dartmoor and ask him to tell your friend how ill

you have been and give him hope of a speedy visit from you."

George had no words to express his gratitude, but his dark, sunken eyes brimmed full, and the colour flashed into his white face; and these signs said more to Robert Pennington than hurrying syllables, however eloquent. When they parted that night they had come close to each other. The hand-clasp, the steady look, the few simple words at parting, had a significance that satisfied both.

Left to himself, Robert Pennington gave way to uncontrollable anguish of heart. "It is Arthur! It is Arthur himself!" he cried. "Who else could have done this great thing? Oh, my brother, my brother! your love shames me. Such a sublime silence! Such grandeur of self-sacrifice! Divine Redeemer of men, Thou, and Thou only, hast been his teacher."

He rose with a hurry of affection. Every moment's delay was a separate pain. He occupied the night in writing letters, in arranging his affairs for an uncertain absence, in preparing himself personally for a journey. While it was yet dark he called his servants and

his nephew ; they had breakfasted and were ready to start when the day broke. In forty-eight hours they were in London. Here they were delayed some time. Certain official forms had to be observed, and official routine was not to be regulated by the impatience of any suitor. Then George had a serious relapse ; it was the middle of November when they were able to travel westward.

The weather was wet and mournful ; George thought everything around was the colour of ashes. The great flocks of crows flying heavily and silently through the dense air gave to the landscape a gloomier shade, and to themselves a sense of uncanny and unfortunate companionship. They mounted higher and higher, till the rolling fog became cutting sleet, and the horses panted and stood still in their distress. They were one thousand feet above the sea, in a wild and howling wilderness. There was still another rise of eight hundred feet, and nothing but granite and withered gorse and heather around them. Everything was soaked and frozen. The utter forlornness of this stony, misty desert entered into the hearts of both men. They felt a cold despair, a silent horror,

which could not rise even to an interchange of their wretchedness.

As they neared the prison barracks a cold, freezing wind blew the mist hither and thither, and in so doing revealed, as through a veil, the dreary granite building. Its high walls, its awful portal of almost fantastic dread and gloom, had a fearsome unreality. Backwards and forwards rolled the heavy masses of vapour, hiding and discovering the different gangs of convicts at their labour, the cordons of armed guards, the pickets with their ready rifles.

The men worked mechanically, unceasingly, with bent heads. An air of silence and mystery and despair pervaded them. Toiling convicts, watchful guards, imperturbable, resolute pickets, all alike had the atmosphere of personages in some awful dream. The gloomy village attached to the prison is the highest inhabited place in England. No one lives there but the emissaries of punishment and justice—except the priests who have these lost sheep of the wilderness in their spiritual care.

Robert Pennington drove to the Governor's house. He had letters with him which would secure every privilege he desired, and a private

interview with "Criminal 3,300" was the first request made. An order to this effect was sent to the prison-house, and pending its execution the Governor pressed upon the travellers some refreshment. Robert Pennington forced himself to accept the kindness. He was aware that the body might fail where the soul would face its extremity. He drank a glass of wine and ate some food, and by a look of commanding entreaty compelled George to do the same. In half an-hour they were escorted through those tremendous portals of shame. The chaplain met them with a concerned face. He had a card in his hand inscribed with the number of the man who had once possessed a name. He looked at it and then at his visitors—

"Gentlemen, '3,300' is very ill. He has been in the hospital for six weeks. By order he has just been removed into a private room. He will have solitude to die in. That is a great deal here, I assure you."

He opened a door with the words and softly shut it when they had entered. Kellish lay upon a narrow bed. His eyes were closed, he was wasted away, he was breathing slowly and with difficulty. But one glance was sufficient for

Robert Pennington. With an incredible swiftness and solemnity he reached the dying man, he knelt at his side, he called out with intensity of woeful love and anguish.

"Arthur! Arthur! My brother! My brother Arthur!"

A shrill weak cry—the cry of a man from the very shoal of Time, answered him.

Then George knew the whole mystery of love. No one needed to teach him the word he kissed upon lips already kissed by death.

"Father! Father! Father!"

At that cry a glory of love illumined the clay-like mask. The soul leaped once more into the eyes. The last tears—tears of joy—softened their piercing gaze. At that moment the heart of the son was drawn deep and close to the father's heart: just as the heart of the mother-bird is drawn down into the nest full of new life.

"I have attained to the beginning of eternal peace," he whispered. Earth had passed quite away, he had forgotten its shame and sufferings, everything but its love. After a few moments Robert Pennington left father and son alone for their last communion. Angels

heard their words of contrition and forgiveness and affection with bowed heads. Death—not unpitying as mortals think—waited until the solemn, tender “adieu” had been said. The room was full of a great peace—a peace that could be felt. At the last moment he regained a flash of strength. He smiled bravely as he looked farewell into the loving eyes watching him. “I fear no longer,” he said, cheerfully. “*One* has taken my hand. I am safe.”

And so the red-leaved book of this sinning, sorrowing, loving human heart was closed and sealed for ever. They took out of his clasped hand a bit of paper on which something was written. Uncle and nephew read it together with holy reverence, and then George put it next his heart. It was eight lines from that glorious hymn of Stephen the Sabaite, written more than seventeen hundred years ago—

If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
Not till earth, and not till heaven,
Pass away!

Finding, following, praying, struggling,
Is He sure to bless?
Angels, Martyrs, Prophets, Virgins,
Answer—“Yes.”

One promise had been made to the dead man—that he should not be buried in the desolate graveyard attached to the prison. They took him back to Pennington, to the home of his youth. In that lonely Cumberland village men and women had old-world attachments, and with them affectionate reticences. When the Squire came home with the coffin, and the grave was opened in the Pennington burial-ground, there were many living who knew *whose* mournful life was ended. They glanced at each other with intelligent pity, but no one told the new generation the tragedy of the Squire's brother. The clergyman who had baptized, buried him, and many an old man and woman with silent kindness dropped a sprig of box or rosemary into his grave. It was snowing heavily when they laid him there, and within an hour the new-made bed was covered with a white mantle of stainless purity.

A month after this George Pennington was on his way to the Crimea. He hoped in that campaign of suffering and danger to find opportunities for doing something great in atonement for his past life. For to be its own salvation, that is ever the first dream of a soul

repentant and aspiring. He went a little from the direct road in order to bid his sister "good-bye." For though he generally disagreed with her upon all points, the family tie drew them close together in eventful hours.

He found Harriet in her nursery. She had just returned from a morning drive. The feeling of the fresh air was around her, and she had in a marked degree the appearance of a woman accustomed to the fields and woods. Her bonnet was on her head, her cloak over her arm, her two eldest boys clinging to her dress, her baby stretching out its arms for her embrace. She made a charming picture, and George was sensitive to it. He kissed her with an affection which made her face bright with smiles, and when she saw the traces of his suffering she clasped his hand in her own, and led him with loving words into her sitting-room. She had wonderful things to tell him about the children, and she did not notice for some time that George was distraught and restless under this infliction. Then it struck her that he might be hungry, and she rung the bell and ordered an earlier lunch.

"You know I will not eat in Colonel Sut-

cliffe's house, Harriet ; I came only to bid you farewell. I am going to the Crimea."

"George, how can you be so dreadful—keeping up ill-will about a creature like that Kellish?"

"That 'creature,' as you call him, is dead. Tell your husband so. Colonel Sutcliffe has had his pound of flesh—has had justice. When he goes to church let him remember it ; let him pray, 'Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them who trespass against me.' If God is as just with him as Sutcliffe was with—the dead, he will get what he gave—the outer darkness for the hell of Dartmoor."

"Dear me ! what does it all mean ? You fret yourself into a fever about this man ; and while Harry was worrying over an unpleasant dream he had of mother and the same dreadful person, down from London comes Lord Penrith."

"What ?"

"Lord Penrith, I assure you ; and what he thought, or what object he could have, goodness only knows ! But he begged Harry not to prosecute. He said he did not believe Kellish was guilty, and when Harry replied, 'The man has confessed,' he reiterated, 'I don't believe he is guilty.' Finally he told Harry a very strange

thing about the late lord. I suppose I ought not to mention it."

"You can safely tell me."

"He said his father's life had been darkened and shortened by prosecuting a man for a similar act. On his deathbed he made this confession, and he begged his son for his sake to be very merciful to men conquered by a sudden temptation. It seems the old lord sent his dearest friend to prison, and never could undo the step he took in the first hours of his anger. Of course Harry was not to be dictated to in a matter of right and wrong, but he pleaded for a light punishment, and the man was very mercifully treated."

"Very! he is dead—dead from toil and exposure that he was unable to bear. I hope Sutcliffe will remember the victim of his justice when he lies down upon his own deathbed."

"You are very cruel to say such a dreadful thing. And what better are you than Harry? If you think Harry ought to have passed by the fault of this strange man, why should you not pass by the fault of your sister's husband?"

"You are right, Harriet. I am not Sutcliffe's judge. Well, then, ring for lunch, and I will

eat it with you. Many a month may pass before we meet again."

"Now you are like yourself, George ; and I have something to tell you—something you will be delighted with. We are going to call baby after you."

"My dear Harriet, I would not advise you to risk baby's future upon my name. Call him Robert Pennington—then you call him after a noble man. Besides, you must think for baby's interests, and Robert Pennington has a large estate to leave as it pleases him."

"You are his acknowledged heir."

"I am going to the war. I may never come back again."

"I will not listen to such a supposition. Of course Robert is a beautiful name, and, indeed a family name of the Sutcliffe's, but—oh ! did I tell you that I had had a letter from the Island ? Guess from whom ?—and lunch is ready I see. Come, I will send the servant away, and we will have the hour quite to ourselves."

Harriet was a notable mistress. Her table was perfection, her servants trained to the utmost efficiency and propriety. And George watched her giving orders and directions with

admiration. For she was a woman well moulded to the ordinary condition of things, fitly fleshed, mentally inclined to take kindly to the law of gravitation. The every-day hum of humanity filled her ear with content; she heard not—she never tried to hear—in all life's varying noises, joyful and sorrowful, the meaning that, runs through them: the measured music, the central tune.

She chatted with a pleasant, confidential air, affectionately curious about her brother's plans, affectionately indifferent about a past which she instantly perceived he was not disposed to discuss. When they were half through lunch she again remembered the letter from the Island, and exclaimed a little at George's apathy concerning it.

"Only fancy! A letter from Bella Clucas, and you have not a question to ask!"

"Is it from Bella? I hope it pleased you."

"Indeed it did not. I considered it a very ungrateful and ungracious answer to the one I sent her."

"Then you wrote first? I was wondering if Bella did."

"I wrote because I really thought I could do

Bella—and of course myself also—a great kindness. Mrs. Layland, who had been house-keeper here for forty years, died last spring, and I had a frightful experience with half a-dozen women who tried to take her place. At last I thought of Bella. I offered her the entire charge of the house and servants, with a very handsome salary and her own sitting-room and bedroom—and *she refused!* ”

“I should have been much astonished if she had accepted.”

“She is unmarried yet, evidently still thinking of you. In such case I naturally imagined that she would be thankful to be where there was at least a prospect of seeing you occasionally.”

“I declare, Harriet, your conscience has as many jerks and turnings as a swallow on the wing. Now, I suppose it did not strike you that you might be purchasing your own comfort at the price of suffering or temptation to Bella—perhaps to me also.”

“I knew that you had recovered your senses on that subject. Bella is quite able to take care of herself; but I will get her letter and read it to you.”

“‘Mrs. Sutcliffe’—that is how it begins.

She might have said 'My Lady,' or 'My Honoured Friend,' or something of that kind. She knew very well I was Lady of Sutcliffe Manor. I explained the dignity fully to her when I was engaged to Harry.—'Mrs. Sutcliffe, Your letter was very bewildering to me, and it is much if I can say the right words in answer to it. Service—surely every one must do service, and with heart and hands I'm doing it; love though—love and not gold, the for. At first I was asking what did you mean, and hardly knowing for all. But Gale was reading your letter, and he out with it plain enough—"It's her servant she's wanting you to be," and me saying "ridiculous," but him getting angry for all. Fishers, of course, and not counting ourselves quality, but very comfortable and able to pay the last farthing due, and quite content with God's measure for all. Of course there's a power to do in a house like yonder at Sutcliffe, but there's gold in your hand, plenty of service to buy, and so there you are—and no offence meant, and thanking you kindly for the good intent, and all to that. And no hindrance from any—only Gale—but father and mother giving me a list to do my will, and my will always to

the good home I have. God bless it ! ' What do you think of that for Bella Clucas ? "

" I think very highly of it ; you have only yourself to blame if you feel hurt. After making her your friend, you had no right to offer her wages. Is that all she says ? "

" It is all that concerns me specially, the rest refers to the Dinwoodies mainly. Do you care to hear it ? " A slight movement of the head answered the question, and she proceeded.

" 'Tis a quiet life in the Island, but some changes, and you perhaps not hearing of them. Miss Frances Caine married to an English lord, and Miss Jeffcott to a lawyer from Ramsey, and the Miss Hamiltons to officers, and the officer's going to the war, and trouble enough that way. And Miss Dinwoodie has had a heart full of sorrow. Oh, dear ! Heart full and hands full—but naturally sweet and kind, and God good to such. Two years her mother was in the bed dying—mortals hardly knowing the suffering she had—and Miss Kitty by her side, whether or not, night and day, and after all the last word and kiss, and hard to bear is them ! But still harder at hand, for the Major was broken-hearted, though shedding no tear and speaking

to no one till the evening of the second day—and me with her and doing the best I could, but for all that her going sobbing and shivering through the house, for her mother was wrapped in her very heart ; and as for the Major, as I was saying, wasn't the dead woman the joy of every breath he took ? And so on the second evening—*she called him !* He was sitting in his big chair with his head in his hands, and the sweet Sunday sunset sifting through the dropped blinds, and all of a sudden he rises straight up like one listening, and answers out clear, "*I am coming, Nora.*" Just one smile at Miss Kitty as she caught him in her arms, and gone he was, for all that love and doctors could do. So then the grave was made wider, and they buried them side by side, and all Castletown, rich and poor, at the funeral ; and the parson wanting Miss Kitty to stay with him, and talking and reasoning a deal about it, but Miss Kitty not regarding, and going back to her own house. Well, then, the servants are old and very kind to her and all to that, but lonely, no doubt, and every one sorry enough for her.' "

"Dear little Kitty ! I remember well how

the Major idolised his wife—a fisher-girl you know, Harriet, out of the cottages of Craig-y-neesh—a most lovely woman, and good as lovely. Kitty was never ashamed of her origin.”

“Kitty expressed herself in the most unlady-like and uncalled-for manner on the subject. It was false pride in her, and I and others were made very uncomfortable more than once about it. Kitty is sentimental; that is such a weak point in a woman’s character.”

“Have you finished the letter?”

“Nearly. Bella is kind enough to ‘often look at the house where we used to live’; she writes—‘it is still unlet. And, oh, then, people are saying it is haunted by a dark man with eyes that burn like fire. Such foolishness! I was twice seeing Mr. Kellish in the garden, walking about and thinking to himself like, and the ghost would be him, never fear, and nothing worse, and nothing but good if so.’ That is all, and I am glad she did not take my offer. Such a woman would have made the house very uncomfortable.”

“Harriet, I wish you would write to Kitty.”

“I couldn’t, really, George. Three years ago,

when we had that large winter party and you spent a week with us, I invited Miss Dinwoodie. She had a list of the expected guests, and knew you were to be present. I received in answer a cool, civil 'regret' without a single excuse for it."

"Perhaps she had no excuse."

"Then she ought to have made one, as a matter of politeness. People always do."

"Well, my dear sister, I must leave you now. Bring the boys and let me kiss them." He laughed at Harriet's anxiety for him, and amid the children's chatter and the mother's smiles and tears went away with apparent cheerfulness. He had no inclination to darken his sister's life with either his knowledge or his experiences. She did not perceive his mental anguish—she could have given him no help if she had. Suffering such as he was enduring does not rise to the surface ; it makes itself a channel to the very depths of being.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUNRISE.

Then my heart fainted utterly,
And all things seemed to darken, and I crept
A little from the gate and stumbled where
The graves are thickest. There the people lie
And weep no more; the stately trees that keep
Their dark watch in the place of graves are used
To shelter calmer faces, stiller hearts than mine.
In their deep shadows I fell down
And tried to call on God, but in that hour
Of agony the clouds were dark between
My soul and Him.

Stir the deep wells of life that flow within you,
Touched by God's genial hand,
And let the chastened, sure ambition win you
To serve His high command.

THE poorest life a man can live is serious enough when seen against eternity, but George Pennington's life had been one full of incident and experience. All the more terrible was the remorse which now continually reminded him of the great love slain, of the vast

opportunities abused or neglected. Since that hour in which the father had assumed the shame and suffering of his crime George Pennington had never felt young. *He walked upon the shadow of his past.* The future was emptied of hope. The ordinary motives which move men to great deeds and renunciations had lost their power over him.

He found himself at Balaklava among many of the same men he had been accustomed to meet in the London clubs and drawing-rooms. They were enduring every extremity of physical discomfort and suffering with a gay bravery which was amazing. Love of country, hope of advancement, natural courage, youthful exuberance showing itself in a craving for adventure—even family pride, all proved to be elevating motives to the men whom he had only known as foolish, thoughtless followers of what they called pleasure. One morning he met the Honourable Sydney Balfour, a handsome youth, who had been the darling of the last season. George remembered him as an effeminate dandy, lightly laughing at all noble emotions, without reverence for women, whom he called "the fair,"

and to whom he uttered nothing but compliments. The young fellow was now in a constant and healthy enthusiasm. Even the altogether human sentiment of family honour, identified with love of country, had lifted him far above that well-dressed world which he had known best by candle-light.

"Oh, you know, Pennington," he said, with his honest, beardless face aglow, "a man with ancestors has to do the right thing. Balfour is a great name, and recalls a thousand great memories. Of course, the present earl isn't much—perhaps he had never a chance to do anything but get prizes for short-horns—but when I see my stout uncle standing in the door of Balfour Castle I see Agincourt in the background, and hear a pomp of fancied trumpets on the wind."

"I understand, then, that your ancestors guarantee your good conduct. But, Sydney, I know great families who lose themselves as a river does in a morass—or perhaps the stream stagnates through bare, level sands to the sea. Nobility should be virtue of race, but it is seldom this result is obtained."

"Nonsense! Good men come from good

men. No great deeds are done by knaves, or traders hungry for wealth. Men of noble traditions and brave instincts make history and build up nations. I believe in the transmission of family excellence. My old uncle often says, 'Where you have gathered strawberries once you will be very likely to gather them again.' He never minded what mother called 'my frivolity'; he used to say, 'It is the froth on the flagon; when it has settled the liquor underneath will be none the worse, I warrant!'"

"Still, we are in a new era, Sydney. Men of genius are slowly altering the very instincts of the English people. The steam engine——"

"Excuse me, George, national honour is older than the steam engine."

"Still, I say we cannot judge the present by the past."

"The present is moored upon the past. A great deal of everything we are proudest of is drawn from our ancestors. There is an alarm, George."

"Some sentinel who has heard a leaf fall and thinks it is a Russian."

"But there are the picket volleys! And now the bugles on the streets!"

He leaped to his feet, his spurs jingled, his steel scabbard clanked in unison, he waved his hand enthusiastically as he passed through the low door of the Greek fisherman's hut, in which this conversation had taken place.

George went more quietly into the narrow street. It was crowded with artillery and commissariat waggons, with hosts of soldiers, and officers on horseback ; and a large body of sailors, armed with cutlasses, were dragging their heavy ship guns up to camp, cheering with all their might as they went.

Among these blue-shirted braves one man was pre-eminent. His great size, the enormous gun at which he was tugging, the volume of cheerful vociferation with which he led the way, attracted George. He went closer to him, and found that his instant suspicion had been a true one. It was Gale Clucas. In such moments of common enthusiasm some men forget their private feelings. George did. He called the young fisher by his name, and lifted his plumed helmet to him.

"*Hello, Captain !*" was the ready response, and the two words brought a mist into the Captain's eyes. Oh ! if he could only call back

all the rich blessings of the past as easily as he had won again those two words of ready comradeship from the offended Gale.

In the constant alarms and skirmishes that occurred at Balaklava—the apple of discord between the two armies—George Pennington took his full share. He slept coated and booted and spurred, and always ready for battle at the second bugle call. He knew in their extremity the deprivations and sufferings which the noble as well as the peasant had to endure, but he found no peace in this hard discipline. All the red graves in those narrow gorges could not hide from his spiritual sight that long white mound in Pennington churchyard.

He called himself continually by one awful word, and it seemed as if expiation was forbidden him. In the front of every danger, in the thick of every fight, he had sought to lay down his own life in atonement for the life that went out in the grim horror of Dartmoor. The sacrifice had been refused. Once his soul had been possessed of many passions, wearied with many sadnesses, troubled with many fears, but now it only felt the hopelessness of both life and death. A face marred with sorrow, but

always light with love, was ever before him. He could not forget for a moment its long look of disappointment, the sad lips that had asked so little from him.

If that wronged one could return ! With what kisses would he cover his hands ! He would fall at his feet, he would never more disobey his slightest wish. Secret, forgotten unkindnesses came to his remembrance continually. Oh, for one hour, one hour only, with that dear, dead friend ! He would have bought it gladly with his life. Too late ! Never would he find again on earth the one whom he had made suffer ; never be able to tell him, that in spite of all, he loved him. Ah, it is the irreparable that tortures ! When the soul is forced to contemplate what no longer exists it has these refinements of agonising tenderness.

In the gloom of a life so full of despair one great pleasure came to him. He found Gale Clucas in the naval hospital at Therapia, dying in the dreadful despondency of Varna fever, and he took him into his own tent. The young giant was weak as the new-born babe, he had succumbed to the desperate apathy of the disease. At first Gale was quite indifferent to

the unwearying love which was working night and day for his recovery, but as the fever was gradually conquered George began to reap the reward of his kindness.

"I'm knowin you, Captain," said Gale one night. It was bitterly cold, and George sat beside him motionless, rolled up in his saddle-skins. "I'm knowin you, Captain—and the kind you have been—aw, 'deed, very kind! I was losin heart. I wonder you did it."

"I was glad to do it, Gale. I was saving life, that is a great thing—and when I saw you at Therapia I could think of nothing but the little boat tossing on the sea, and you and me—two boys just—throwing our lines from it. All that has passed since I hope you will forgive."

"Aw, then, axin pardon myself. I was hatin you bad enough—and the murder in my heart—and willin to put you on the black teeth of Scarlett rocks yon night if father had been in my mind; but the cry of you was in his ear, and he bound to lizzen. Aw, dear! the wicked it seems now—and the foolish. I was hard to please them times, and very easy to anger; but Bella! aw, yes, Bella!—you was wrong there, Captain."

"Very wrong, Gale. I am sorry for it. You'll forget that?"

"Sartinly. Bella wasn' ever in danger—nothin in her for any man to make bould of—not her way. I hadn' no call to be so surly, for Bella was allis clear as the sun—the truth was in the craythur—and the sense, too."

"And Lace? Lace Corrin; you remember Lace?"

"Very likely Lace is in the Brigade with me, but in the ship, and so not in the way of the fever, thank God! A fine fellow, and all to that."

George hesitated a moment, then asked, "Are they married yet? I mean Lace and Bella."

"The for? The young man plannin no doubt, and prittin and prattin to Bella about it—and the how and the what of it—but Bella very considerate."

"He has been a long time in love with Bella."

"Lace? Aw, then, love keeps, and grows better for the keepin. In the Bible one man—better man than Lace mayve—waitin fourteen years, and very fond at the end of them. I'm

thinkin a deal of Bella, and not wantin any man to be takin my sister, botherin no man's sister myself."

"Hard on Lace."

"Not a bit of it. Lace quite content for all, and takin his live or die from Bella's smile or will, worshippin her; just idikkilis! The girl isn' his kith nor kin—and wishin for things is easy, but a long sea between wishin and havin. Aw, yes, bless God!"

"Doesn' Lace complain?"

"Complain is it? Very tormentin sometimes, takes no rest on the subjec; at it, and at it, and *must know*—aw, then, he settles quick enough when Bella's spakin to him—very demandin is Lace, sometimes—what's the use?"

"But she will marry Lace some day?"

"Some day, some way, who knows when? Changes every year. 'Wait,' says I to him, 'waitin's good, hurry's bad.'"

"So, then, Bella is at the cottage yet?"

"Where else? And the light of it, and my mother's right hand, and goin through my father's heart like the tide of life. Mother and father and myself—who more right to

Bella? Mother's not strong, and a deal of knittin to do for the childer and the men—and doin it—and father not carin to go to church, to market, nor to the boat itself without Bella, leanin on her like, and mixin his life so up with hers, that partin couldn' be—partin and livin, I mean; partin would be dyin for the sweet auld man."

"Was Bella willing for you to come here?"

"Willin is it? Sendin us both in her compellin way with the smile and the brave word—'What are you fishin for, boys, and fightin to do?' and the like of them; or, 'Aw, then, if I was a man I'd be where they were shootin the guns, instead of the nets!' and the light in her blue eyes, and the pride and spirit of the craythur! Wonderful! 'Lace,' says I, 'we have got to go.' 'Yes,' say she, 'or she will be puttin us under her feet.'"

"So you came here to please Bella, and not for the glory of the fight?"

"Aw, then, the glory Bella was takin in the fight was the glory for us. To see her readin the papers to father, and the blaze on her cheeks and the light in her eyes and the blessin she was givin the women, and yet envyin

them that were goin to nurse the sick and wounded, but held at home for all by the two lookin to her. Bella is a fine gel—none like her.”

“And still handsome?”

“Handsome is it you’re axin? Handsome! By St. Christopher, she’s far beyand it! If I could draw a pictur of her as I saw her last ’twould make your heart stand still; ’deed, it would. Wonderful handsome! Lace and I was sayin the last words, and mother, God bless her, sat down in her chair when she let my hands out of hers. She was puttin the Bible then in their place, knowin the sweet words into it well for all, but like the childer wantin *to feel them in her hands*, and father and Bella followin us to the door, and standin there with the long look in their eyes. ‘Turn round,’ says Lace, when we got to the gate. ’Twas worth it, ’deed it was! Father had one hand on Bella’s shoulder, and with the other he waves a blue handkerchief, and says he, ‘*Hoorah, boys*, and see you drive the Rooshians back to the North Pole—good enough for them—and if you’re doin nothin else, be showin them Frenchers how to fight, and don’ be trustin

them ; for all their palaver, French still. French still !' shouts he, and Bella standin there beside him, with the sea wind blowin her hair and her blue gown, and the sun shinin all over her, and the fuchsia vines droppin round like a frame to the pictur, and then we liftin our caps, and hearin soft-like on the salt wind, '*Good-bye, dears, and be doin your duty allis.*' That's Bella, God bless her."

And the eyes of both men were dim, and they spoke no more that night, but as Gale afterwards told Lace, "a warm feelin between us, and peace and forgiveness full, and no countin backwards for anythin, forgettin no kindness, and forgettin all else, thank God."

So much of comfort George got from his labour of love, but Gale soon went back to his ship, and there is no permanent power in either nature or humanity to give peace to a conscience which God has troubled. One dark midnight he was standing motionless under arms. A small body of men were with him all on guard, and intently listening for an expected attack. Nothing could be seen a foot away, for a dense fog wrapped them in its chilling, depressing atmosphere. The foe was stealthy

and might be close at hand, and the very silence was sensitive with the presence of death and disaster.

Now, then, it was at this hour a word or two was said to George Pennington—a word or two which turned despair and darkness into unspeakable joy and peace. Some sweet, secret message of forgiveness and love which made him lift his white, sad face to the unstarred sky, and catch in the act of adoration a light of peace unspeakable; a glory of happiness such as the world knows not of. He felt that the whole dark past was forgiven, and he cast it behind his back. He knew that the future was a new gift to him, and he consecrated it by an act of momentary but irrevocable surrender.

These special and personal intimacies of the soul and its Maker bring their own assurance and interpretation. Though they are constantly occurring, their secret sacredness, their definite personality, places them beyond general definition. No soul thus favoured wants to define them. Sufficient unto the doubt, the sorrow, the sin, they come with a power and a certainty which nothing in life can give to or take away from. Those ignorant of these holy

intimacies may ask doubtful questions, and smile at such mysteries of faith. Let them first unravel the mysteries of reason. Children of the living God walk in mystery. Their spiritual birth is a mystery, their spiritual life is a mystery. And this shroud of mystery is their glory, it is the awful, splendid shadow which eternity casts across time.

How poor, how wretchedly poor, is that soul which has never walked in those blessed paths of spiritual life—remote, obscure, little trodden, bordering on regions beyond this world, among the secret things not hidden from the Beloved of the Lord. One such experience as George Pennington had while waiting silently on the battle-ground makes a man really a new man. He had comprehended the measure of duty that lay before him—the hope in the future—the work to be done—the love and labour which must sanctify it, although the rapture of that experience lasted but a few moments.

Then the wonderful peace was sharply broken by the crack of rifles and the shouts of the advancing enemy. The first words George uttered after that mysterious conference, the order to “Charge!” was the rallying shout as he led his

men against their midnight foe. It was a hand-to-hand fight, one of many such experiences, and almost in the beginning of it George was struck down by his antagonist. So often he had wished for death, had sought it in the front of danger, and death had always passed him by. Now the very first gift of the reconciled Father was the chastisement of physical pain. He was carried in a state of insensibility to the hospital, and recovered life only by the sharpness of its suffering. He was unable to open his eyes, but he knew by the modulated voices of those bending over him, by the atmosphere, by the sharp cries of pain around him, that he was in the halls of Scutari.

He did not feel any wonder or regret. The very battle-field would have been a Chamber of Peace. But as the days went by, and his senses began to recover their power, he was aware of the presence of some one whose touch was inexpressibly gentle, whose low words sounded sweetly familiar in his ear. That it was a woman was no wonder, for lovely women flitted noiselessly about from pallet to pallet carrying hope and comfort, and making those vast halls of agony almost holy places. But

George was certain that it was the voice of a woman well known to him.

On the third night, as she bent over him and moistened his lips, and gently raised his wounded head, he opened wide his eyes and looked at her. Her flowing hair was coiled under a close cap, her plain dress covered with a white apron, her dimpled, laughing face grown sad and weary in its long vigils with suffering and death. But George knew her.

"Kitty!" he whispered. For answer she kissed his white lips and let the blessed rain of pitying love fall upon his wan cheeks. He made a slight movement, she divined that he wanted to feel her hands within his own, she knelt down by his side and clasped them. She took up their life again at the point at which it had been dropped. All that intervened she buried deeper than memory could reach. The entreaty in that first long look—the tenderness in that whisper which could utter only her name—she understood all they asked, and granted it in the moment of asking.

What sweet, short confidences! what happy promises! what love and trust and hope brightened the hours of his convalescence!

But both did their full duty until the fall of Sebastopol permitted an honourable return to private life. And it is in the way of duty we meet the sweetest blessings. Kitty had resigned all hope of a happy termination to her love. She believed George Pennington to have completely forgotten her, she had heard nothing of him for a long time. After the death of her father and mother she had no tie to the Island, she had no work left sufficient to employ a heart so loving and hands so busy. So the cry of distress which touched so many noble women went straight to Kitty's heart ;—

God made her so,
And deeds of a week-day holiness
Fell gently from her as the snow ;
Nor had she ever chanced to know
That aught was easier than to bless.

The attraction between her and George had been from the first a distinct and powerful one, nothing but his wanderings in ways beyond her innocent ken had parted them ; but she felt from the moment of their reunion that some blessed change had taken place—some change which left her free of fear, and enabled her to give unreservedly, doubting nothing.

And if Kitty perceived the radical elevation of her lover's character, Robert Pennington was perhaps even more sensible of it. There was, indeed, a wonderful communion between the two men, a solemn interchange of holy experiences which grappled their souls together for eternity; but with these things neither tongue nor pen intermeddleth.

At the time when George had been formally recognised as heir of Pennington, his uncle had promised that there should be no interference with his matrimonial desires. But Kitty Dinwoodie satisfied every wish he had for George's future home. He had seen her in the first flush of her innocent, brilliant beauty; he remembered her kindness to George's mother when the lonely lady lay dying, her devotion to her parents, her unflagging service to her wounded countrymen—all these things promised a wife faithful and affectionate.

So it was with delight he anticipated the marriage, and with generous pleasure he began to prepare the Hall for Kitty's reception. For he perceived that marriage would be for George the noblest and sweetest vestibule to the career which he now saw ready for him—the opening

up of new industries on the estate—the remodelling of the farms and cottages—the magisterial duties which he must soon assume—the vision of Parliamentary honours in the distance. All these, and many other issues were talked over, and both were aware that in the future they could work together with undivided aims and sympathies.

The night before George was to leave Pennington in order to bring home his bride the two men had a long and affectionate conference. All in the past which could sweeten and solemnise the future was recalled ; its bitterness was buried for ever. On George's face there was that light which comes from the interior of a man, the reflection of high purpose, of noble love—a light not quite without the slant shadow of regret. Yet by this very shadow Robert Pennington foresaw the sunshine of the future, for purposeful regret is the seed of redemption.

And as he looked at his nephew he called to mind a certain conference with his dead mother. The golden image with its feet of clay was again visible to his mental vision, but he regarded it now without fear. Feet of Clay still,

but on a road where one One Mighty to Save
walked by the side of pilgrims—a road where
angels watched lest at any time they might
dash against what would wound or injure. Feet
of Clay “shod with the preparation of the gospel
of peace”—Feet of Clay “made iron and brass”
for all the difficult and dangerous paths of life.

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